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Mkts surge for 4th day; Sensex jumps 411 pts

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Can India find a way to fit Yadav in remaining 2 games?

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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India on verge of eradicating Maoist terror, says PM

PANAJI, 20 OCT

India is on the verge of eradicating Naxal-Maoist terror, with security forces freeing over 100 districts from its grip, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday. Speaking onboard INS Vikrant off the Goa coast, Modi praised the forces' courage, saying their efforts have reduced Maoist influence from 125 districts a decade ago to just 11 now. He said only three districts remain affected, while others are now witnessing development with new schools, hospitals and roads replacing violence. "For the first time, people in many such districts will celebrate Diwali with pride and dignity," Modi said, crediting the success to the bravery and sacrifice of security personnel. *—PTI*

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DEEPAVALI VIBES

Buildings across India lit up with colourful lights and earthen lamps as people celebrated Deepavali with festive fervour on Monday. In Bengaluru, children burst crackers, while in Delhi, worsening air quality cast a shadow over the celebrations. A masked man stands near India Gate as the city's Air Quality Index climbed to 345, classified as 'very poor', and is expected to deteriorate into the 'severe' category by Tuesday. Meanwhile, PM Narendra Modi joins Navy personnel aboard INS Vikrant to perform yoga

PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD/PTI

Trump warns India of 'big tariffs' over Russian oil

Don says PM had assured him that Delhi would halt purchase

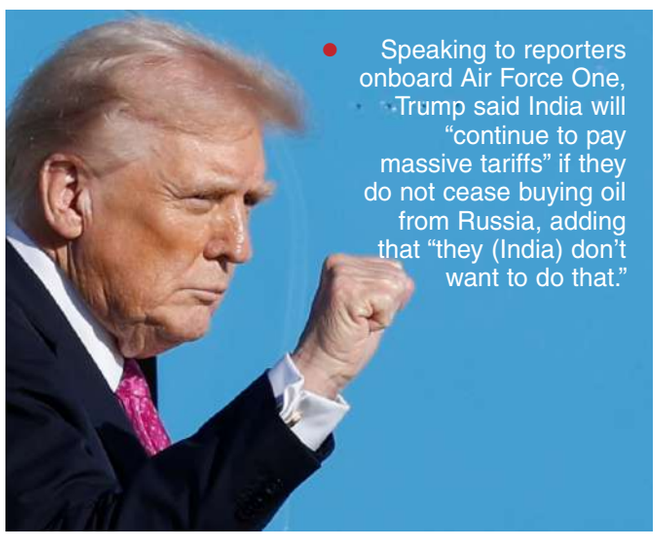
WASHINGTON, 20 OCT

US President Donald Trump has warned that India will face "massive tariffs" if it continues to buy crude oil from Russia, asserting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had personally assured him that New Delhi would halt such imports.

Speaking to reporters onboard Air Force One, Trump said India will "continue to pay massive tariffs" if they do not cease buying oil from Russia, adding that "they (India) don't want to do that."

The comments come amid rising tensions between Washington and New Delhi. The US recently imposed additional tariffs on Indian goods, raising duties to as high as 50 percent, including a 25 percent surcharge linked directly to India's Russian oil purchases. India has condemned the move as "unfair, unjustified and unreasonable."

Trump made similar remarks earlier on 15 October, stating that Modi had assured him that India would cease procuring oil from Russia. "You can't do it immediately," Trump said, "but the process is going to be over with soon."



Speaking to reporters onboard Air Force One, Trump said India will "continue to pay massive tariffs" if they do not cease buying oil from Russia, adding that "they (India) don't want to do that."

Speaking to reporters Trump said, "I spoke with Prime Minister Modi of India, and he said he's not going to be doing the Russian oil thing." He added that if India continues, it "will continue to pay massive tariffs" and that "they don't want to do that."

However, India has denied that any such assurance was given. In response to Trump's claims, New Delhi reiterated that it is "broad-basing and diversifying" its energy imports based on market conditions. Indian officials have stated there was no recent communication where Modi made such a promise.

When asked about the denial, Trump said, "If they want to say that, then they'll just continue to pay massive tariffs."

Trump has repeatedly criticised India's Russian oil imports, claiming they indirectly help fund President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine. "I was not happy that India was buying oil," he told reporters, accusing New Delhi of undermining Western sanctions on Moscow.

The escalating tariff row has strained US-India relations ahead of key global diplomatic engagements. *—PTI*

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PARTIES ANNOUNCE LISTS

RJD, Congress candidates to face off in 5 seats

PATNA, 20 OCT

The Bihar Assembly elections have taken a dramatic turn with both the RJD and Congress – principal constituents of the INDIA bloc, releasing their respective candidate lists, revealing several head-on contests between the two allies.

The RJD on Monday released a list of 143 candidates, just hours before nominations closed for the second and final phase of polling. Congress followed with its own list, confirming it will contest 61 seats, nine fewer than in 2020.

Despite being partners in the INDIA bloc, both parties will face off in multiple constituencies, directly undermining the alliance's unity. At least five RJD candidates will contest against INDIA bloc allies, including Congress and CPI. Congress, in turn, will compete with RJD candidates in Vaishali, Lalganj, Kahalgaon, Rajapakad, and Rosera, and with CPI in Bachwara.

The RJD, led by Lalu Prasad Yadav and Tejashwi Yadav, has defended its stance. "We contest only in Bihar and neighbouring states," said RJD spokesperson Mrityunjay Tiwary. "We don't demand seats elsewhere from our partners. Being the largest party in Bihar, we deserve the maximum number of seats."

Filing of nomination papers ended on Monday for the second and final phase of Bihar polls. According to the Election Commission, altogether 1,314 candidates have been left in the fray for the first phase in which 121 constituencies would go to polls on 6 November. *—PTI*

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PHOTO: FREEPIK

Amazon cloud outage hits major apps worldwide

SAN FRANCISCO, 20 OCT

Amazon said its cloud computing arm, Amazon Web Services (AWS), was recovering from a major outage that disrupted online services globally on Monday. The outage affected popular platforms including Snapchat, Robinhood, Roblox, Fortnite, Signal, and the McDonald's app, according to outage tracker DownDetector. AWS first reported issues in its US-EAST-1 region around 3.11am Eastern Time, citing "increased error rates and latencies." Engineers later confirmed most services were recovering by 6.30am. Cybersecurity experts said the disruption highlighted global dependence on a few major cloud providers. "When something fails, it impacts millions," said UK-based analyst Patrick Burgess. *—PTI*

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Veteran actor Asrani dies at 84 in Mumbai

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

1 JAN, 1941- 10 OCT, 2025

Veteran Bollywood actor Govardhan Asrani, best known for his iconic comic roles, breathed his last on Monday at the age of 84. With a career spanning over five decades and more than 350 Hindi films, Asrani was one of Indian cinema's most enduring character actors, celebrated for his impeccable comic timing, versatility, and iconic roles.

He shot to fame in the 1970s with standout performances in films like 'Mere Apne', 'Koshish', 'Parichay', 'Abhimaan', 'Chupke Chupke', and especially 'Sholay', where his eccentric jailer character became a cultural phenomenon. He appeared in 101 films in the 1970s alone and 107 in the 1980s — a record for a comedian/character actor.

Asrani also shone in lead roles, most notably in 'Chala Murari Hero Banne' (1977), which he wrote and directed. He directed several other films, including 'Salaam Memsaab', and had a successful run in Gujarati cinema during the '70s and '80s. He collaborated extensively with Rajesh Khanna, acting in 25 films alongside him, and was a regular fixture in movies by Hrishikesh Mukherjee, BR Chopra and Basu Chatterjee. He won Filmfare Awards for Best Comedian for 'Aaj Ki Taaza Khabar' and 'Balika Badhu'.

Born in Jaipur in 1941, Asrani studied acting at the Film and Television Institute of India and got his break with 'Hare Kaanch Ki Choodiyan' (1967). He remained active well into the 2000s, featuring in films like 'Hera Pheri', 'Dhamaal', and web series like 'Permanent Roommates'.

Married to actress Manju Bansal, the couple appeared in multiple films together. Beyond acting, Asrani directed films, produced Gujarati content, and even headed FTII during 1988–93. *—PTI*

10 ill after food delayed at CM's event

MANGALURU, 20 OCT

Ten women allegedly fell ill due to suspected hypoglycaemia and dehydration during a public programme attended by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in Dakshina Kannada district on Monday, officials said.

The event 'Ashoka Jana Mana' was hosted by local MLA Ashok Kumar Rai in Puttur city, they said. The incident occurred after an alleged delay in distribution of food and gifts to thousands of people gathered at the venue, police said.

Health officials said the women were suspected to have suffered from hypoglycaemia and dehydration due to the crowd and humid weather conditions. Three of them were administered IV fluids, while seven others were treated as outpatients and later discharged.

The event, organised to highlight public welfare initiatives, witnessed a massive turnout, leading to congestion and confusion when the distribution process was delayed.

Doctors said the combination of high humidity and inadequate hydration likely caused fainting spells among some attendees.

Organisers later expressed regret over the incident and assured that such lapses would be avoided in future programmes. Health officials confirmed that all those affected are now in stable condition. *—PTI*

JMM QUITS BIHAR POLLS, BLAMES CONGRESS-RJD

RANCHI, 20 OCT

Jharkhand's ruling JMM on Monday announced that it would not contest the Assembly elections in neighbouring Bihar, claiming that the decision was taken in the wake of a "political conspiracy" by its allies RJD and Congress, which deprived it of seats as part of the Mahagathbandhan.

Speaking to reporters, senior JMM leader Sudivya Kumar said his party will review the alliance in Jharkhand with the Congress and RJD, and give a befitting reply to the "snub". The announcement came barely two days after the Hemant Soren-led party said that it would go solo in Bihar and contest the elections in six assembly segments as the seat-sharing talks failed.

"RJD and Congress are responsible for depriving JMM from contesting the election as part of a political conspiracy. JMM will give a befitting reply to this, and review its alliance," said Kumar, the state tourism minister. *—PTI*

HARASSED AT WORKPLACE

Ola Electric founder booked after suicide of employee

BENGALURU, 20 OCT

Police have registered a case against Ola Electric founder Bhavish Aggarwal and several senior officials following the suicide of 38-year-old homologation engineer K Aravind, who reportedly mentioned workplace harassment in a handwritten note.

Aravind, who had been working at the company's Koramangala headquarters since 2022, allegedly attempted suicide at his apartment on 28 September and later succumbed to his injuries in hospital. A 28-page note recovered from his room reportedly accused his superiors of mental harassment and withholding of salary and allowances. His brother, Ashwin Kannan, lodged a complaint naming Head of Homologation Engineering Subrat Kumar Das, Aggarwal, and other officials, alleging "sustained workplace harassment" and non-payment of dues. The family also raised concerns over a transfer of Rs 17.46 lakh to Aravind's bank account two days after his death, describing it as suspicious.

A case was registered on 6 October under sections of the law pertaining to abetment of suicide, with police confirming that the investigation is ongoing and that statements are being recorded to ascertain the circumstances surrounding Aravind's death.

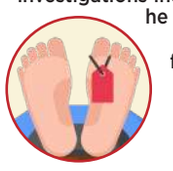
Ola Electric, in response, said it has challenged the FIR in the Karnataka High Court and that protective orders have been issued in its favour. The company expressed deep condolences to the family, stating that Aravind had not raised any grievances during his three-and-a-half-year tenure.

It added that he did not have direct interaction with the company's top management and that the full and final settlement was provided to his family. The company said it is committed to employee safety and well-being. *—PTI*

Man jumps to death from City's GT Mall

BENGALURU, 20 OCT

A 34-year-old man reportedly died by suicide after jumping from the third floor of a mall in the City on Monday morning, according to police. The deceased, identified as Sagar, was an engineering dropout. Authorities have ruled out any foul play. Preliminary investigations indicate that he leapt from the third floor of GT Mall. Family members revealed that Sagar had been experiencing psychological issues and was receiving treatment. Furthermore, police noted that he was unmarried and unemployed at the time of his death. *—PTI*



Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

JD(S) protests in Hassan over 'disrespect' to HDK

HASSAN, 20 OCT

Leaders of the Janata Dal (Secular) (JD(S)) staged a protest on Sunday outside the Hasanamba Temple, alleging that district officials showed disregard for Union Minister and JD(S) state president, HD Kumaraswamy, during his visit. The situation escalated as hundreds of party workers blocked the road, prompting police to intervene. JD(S) MLA Swaroop Prakash denounced the incident, stating, "The district administration disrespected Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy; they completely neglected him." Concurrently, Kumaraswamy inaugurated the 3rd Agricultural Insect Biocontrol Expo in Bengaluru, urging farmers to cultivate pulses alongside other crops to reduce imports and emphasising the government's commitment to agricultural welfare under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. *—ANI*

RPG's Harsh Goenka flays govt on infra

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Kommagatta main Road Near Satellite Club-Kengeri Bengaluru- 60
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The RPG Chairman slams 'thin skinned' DKS for response to Biocon Chief Kiran

A damaged drain cover on Fort Lalbagh Road (left); A fallen drain lid in front of the Police Commissioner's residence on Infantry Road (right), in City on Monday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD***

DK Shivakumar ***PHOTO: PTI***

BENGALURU, 20 OCT

- Biocon Chief Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw has been vocally critical of the City's infra recently. DK Shivakumar took offence and told her to "remember her roots"

Adding to the list of industry heads attacking the ruling Congress over the condition of roads and infrastructure in the City, RPG Enterprises Chairman Harsh Goenka attacked Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar for the latter's response to Biocon Chief Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw.

Mazumdar-Shaw, who has recently been criticising the government, drew Shivakumar's ire on Sunday. The Bengaluru Minister said she had forgotten her roots.

"Those who have started businesses here have grown. After growing big, they have forgotten from what stage they have grown into what stage now. If you forget the root, you will not get the fruit. Some have forgotten and are criticising by tweeting," he said

He said that, "They have some personal agenda with them. Why didn't they open their mouth during BJP regime?"

Mazumdar-Shaw, however, dismissed Shivakumar's statements and said that both she and former Infosys CEO TV Mohandas Pai had criticised the infrastructure under BJP and JD(S) governments.

Replying to Mazumdar-Shaw on X, Goenka wrote, "It's unfortunate how thin-skinned our politicians are. When Mazumdar-Shaw spoke up about Bengaluru's crumbling infrastructure, instead of fixing it, they turned it into politics. Now they'll pressurise her to post "positive tweets." So typical - attack the critic, not the problem." *—Salar News*

Harsh Goenka ***PHOTO: PTI***

RSS row: Shettar flays Cong on 2013 notice

BENGALURU, 20 OCT

Former CM Jagadish Shettar and Minister Priyank Kharge ***PHOTO: PTI***

Former chief minister Jagadish Shettar on Monday hit out at the Congress government for citing a circular issued by the earlier BJP government led by him, to defend their decision making "prior permission" mandatory for private organisations to use public premises for their activities.

The State government on Saturday had issued an order making "prior permission" mandatory for any private organisations, associations or a group of persons to use government property or premises for their activities. The government order does not specifically name RSS.

"It was not an order at the first place… The response was given by the education department denying permission in the form of a circular," Shettar told reporters in Hubballi. "It was not a decision taken by the Cabinet when I was the CM….it was also not a general circular for the entire State, and had no reference to RSS."

Accusing IT/BT Minister Priyank Kharge of misleading Chief Minister Siddaramiah over the former's appeal to prohibit government workers from attending RSS marches, he said, "There is also an order or circular from the Central government. At least ask your IAS officers or Chief Secretary or the law department about it. The prohibition that was there on government employees from participating in RSS activities was reviewed and withdrawn. As per central government rules an employee can take part in RSS activities."

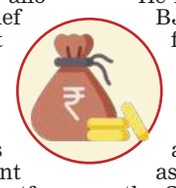
Priyank responded by asking if the Chief Minister's responsibility restricted just to the finance department? As the CM, he is responsible for the decisions taken by the government during his tenure.

Stating that the current government order too does not make any reference to RSS, he said, "I saw his (Shettar) statement. He has said that it was a circular issued by the education department. We have never denied that. It was issued by the education department when he was the Chief Minister, restricting the use of school premises and attached playgrounds for educational purposes only…..we are only continuing its implementation." *—PTI*

Priyank slams Centre for unfair flood relief allocation

BENGALURU, 20 OCT

State Minister Priyank Kharge has expressed strong discontent over the central government's recent allocation of flood relief funds, claiming that states not affiliated with the BJP consistently receive less financial support. Kharge, who oversees the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj portfolio, said the sum allocated for the State, amounting to Rs 384.40 crore, is insufficient given the extensive damages reported from this year's monsoon flooding.



"Despite being one of the highest GST-collecting States and contributing over 8.9 per cent to the nation's GDP, State faces unfair treatment in the devolution of funds," Kharge stated.

He further asserted that the BJP-ruled states are favoured, while those aligned differently are "always short-changed."

Union Home Minister Amit Shah had approved a total of Rs 1,950.80 crore as the second instalment of the Central share of the State Disaster Response Fund for 2025-26, with Maharashtra receiving a significantly larger portion of Rs 1,566.40 crore. Kharge insisted that the allocation is inadequate to meet the State's needs. *—PTI/ANI*

CM rejects allegations of funding Bihar polls

MANGALURU, 20 OCT

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday rejected Opposition BJP's allegation that the Congress government in the state was funding its party, in the upcoming Bihar polls.

"We have not given even a 5 paise to any state election from Karnataka, we are not giving to Bihar also," Siddaramaiah said in response to a question. "They (BJP) were doing it, now they are accusing us of it."

He was reacting to BJP MPs B Y Raghavanedra and Jagadish Shettar's allegation that the Siddaramaiah-led government was involved in fundraising for the Congress party for the Bihar elections, a practice they claimed has led to increase in corruption in the state.

Bihar polls will be held over two phases on 6 and 11 November. The votes will be counted on 14 November.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar similarly dismissed the claims, asking the BJP to provide evidence. *—PTI*

60% of State not covered: Ashoka on caste survey

HASSAN, 20 OCT

Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly, R Ashoka said socio-economic and educational survey was conducted with incomplete information and did not even reach 60 per cent of coverage.

"They (Congress) are lying in the survey; it has not even crossed 60 per cent. Many have not given complete information," he stated. "I myself have not given all the information so far. Those who came for the survey drank coffee and left."

He claimed that officials were coercing citizens to participate in the survey.

"Who gave them the authority to threaten? Infosys Narayana Murthy and Sudha Murthy have also denied," Ashoka said. "What is the purpose of conducting a survey by threatening your life?" *—ANI*

Govt reclaims 300 acres of encroached land

SRINIVASAPUR, 20 OCT

In a three-day operation, forest officials reclaimed nearly 300 acres of encroached land in Srinivasapur taluk in Kolar district, part of the Royalpad reserve forest in Kotlavaripalli village, officials said.

The eviction drive, led by DCF Sareena Sikligar and ACF Mahesh K, was carried out with police support and earthmovers. Several mango trees and a few permanent structures, including pump houses, were demolished. The reclaimed land is valued at around Rs 70 crore, according to RFO Ravikeerthi.

Despite prior eviction notices, some farmers refused to vacate. Officials allowed them to harvest crops such as tomatoes before clearing the land. Steps are now underway to dig trenches, plant saplings, and erect fences to prevent future encroachments. Additional monitoring teams will patrol the area to ensure the land remains protected.

Workers dig trenches to plant saplings in the reclaimed land in Srinivasapur taluk ***PHOTO: SALAR***

Villagers had also planted tomatoes and other such crops in the area. The forest department said it allowed the residents to harvest the crops before the demolition.

DCF Sikligar said more than 8,000 acres of forest land in the district have been illegally occupied, with about 3,300 acres reclaimed recently. Former DCF Yedukondalu had earlier led similar drives, recovering 2,500 acres during his tenure. *—Salar News*

CM BATS FOR GREEN CRACKERS

Karnataka celebrates Deepavali with festive fervour

BENGALURU, 20 OCT

The State celebrated Deepavali with zeal on Monday, as people flocked to temples, adorned their homes with flowers and lamps, and burst crackers to mark the festival of lights. Dressed in new attires, residents exchanged greetings, embracing the spirit of the festival that symbolises the triumph of light over darkness.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar extended Deepavali greetings to everyone.

Taking to social media platform X, Siddaramaiah said, "May this festival, which shows the path from darkness to light, dispel the darkness of hatred, violence, falsehood, unrest, poverty, and ignorance that plague society, and spread the light of friendship, coexistence, truth, peace, and wisdom everywhere, I pray." He urged people to use only green firecrackers and advised elders to ensure safety of young children while bursting them.

The City skyline comes alive on Monday; A boy plays with coloured lanterns in Bidar ahead of Deepavali ***PHOTOS: MOHHAMAD ASAD/SALAR***

Markets across Bengaluru, including KR Market, Chickpet and Avenue Road, donned a festive look since early morning as people thronged stores to buy sweets, flowers, earthen lamps and decorative items.

After the Supreme Court's recent directive regulating firecracker use in Delhi-NCR, the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) has implemented similar restrictions across the State. It has instructed all district administrations to intensify the crackdown on illegal storage, sale and trading of non-green crackers.

The board has permitted the bursting of crackers only between 8pm and 10pm on 21 and 22 October.

The Bengaluru Traffic Police has made arrangements to ease congestion near commercial areas and temples, while hospitals across the City have been put on alert to deal with firecracker-related injuries. Victoria Hospital and Minto Eye Hospital have set up special emergency units to ensure timely treatment. Deepavali is celebrated over three days in Karnataka — Naraka Chaturdashi, which involves the traditional oil bath and fireworks; Lakshmi Puja on

CESC ISSUES SAFETY GUIDELINES

Chamundeshwari Electricity Supply Corporation (CESC) on Monday issued safety guidelines for the Deepavali celebrations in Mysuru and surrounding district its jurisdiction: Chamarajanagar, Kodagu, , Mandya and Hassan. A safe distance should be maintained between electricity lines and burning crackers in streets public places, said CESC Managing Director Munigopal Raju. Ensure all electrical wiring for decorative lights is of good quality and free from damage, he said. Avoid using substandard or frayed wires, as they can easily cause short circuits. Ensure that fireworks are burst in open spaces. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Rs 23 cr liquor among Rs 64 cr seizure in Bihar

PATNA, 20 OCT

Enforcement agencies in Bihar have seized cash, liquor, drugs, and freebies worth Rs 64.13 crore since the assembly election schedule was announced on 6 October. Despite the state being dry, illicit liquor worth Rs 23.41 crore was recovered. Other seizures included narcotics valued at Rs 16.88 crore, freebies at Rs 14 crore, and Rs 4.19 crore in cash. Authorities have arrested 753 people and executed over 13,500 non-bailable warrants to curb the use of money in the polls. The Election Commission has directed police, excise, and revenue intelligence to maintain strict vigilance ahead of the two-phase elections. Flying squads and surveillance teams are monitoring the situation. *—PTI*

Help those without lamps, sweets on Deepavali: UP CM

AYODHYA, 20 OCT

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has appealed to people to assist those unable to light lamps or buy sweets during Deepavali. Speaking at a Nishad community settlement in Ayodhya, he recalled the ancient friendship between Lord Ram and Nishadraj, linking it to the city's grand 'Deepotsav' tradition. "Lamps should be lit in every home. If anyone is unable to do so, help them," he said. Adityanath visited Nishad Basti, Hanumangarhi, and Ram Janmabhoomi, distributing sweets, fruit, and sparklers. His visit followed Sunday's record-breaking Deepotsav, which lit over 26 lakh lamps across the city. Adityanath urged citizens to uphold the spirit of generosity and devotion that defines Ayodhya's Deepavali celebrations. *—PTI*

Was attacked in Sundarbans, says WB LoP Adhikari

KOLKATA, 20 OCT

West Bengal Assembly Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari claimed on Monday that he was attacked by "goons" during a visit to the Sunderbans in South 24 Parganas district on Sunday. The BJP leader alleged the assault occurred while he was travelling to attend Kali Puja and Diwali celebrations in locations including Kashinagar and Raidighi. He described the incidents as a "conspiracy" orchestrated by the ruling Trinamool Congress. Adhikari said he had informed the Sunderban Police District of his itinerary, but authorities "failed" to ensure his security, allegedly flouting prior Calcutta High Court directives. His lawyer has lodged separate complaints with local police, and Adhikari will pursue further legal action. *—PTI*

Ex-Maharashtra minister Shivankar dies

GONDIA, 20 OCT

Former minister and veteran BJP leader Mahadeorao Sukhaji Shivankar died after a prolonged illness in Maharashtra's Gondia district on Monday. Shivankar, 85, breathed his last at his residence in Amgaon. He was a five-time MLA from the Amgaon constituency and had represented the Chimur constituency in the Lok Sabha.The veteran leader also served as the national president of the BJP farmers' cell. Shivankar had announced the bifurcation of Bhandara district and the formation of the new Gondia district on January 26, 1999. He also served as the state irrigation and finance minister in the 1990s. He is survived by his sons and a daughter. The last rites will be conducted on 21 October. *—PTI*

RJD fields big names as Cong falters

RJD fields more women in polls; Congress criticised over seat distribution

PATNA, 20 PCT

As the Bihar Assembly elections approach, RJD and Congress, key INDIA bloc allies, are navigating vastly different trajectories. While the RJD projects electoral confidence with a roster of powerful and controversial candidates, the Congress is battling internal discord and criticism over questionable ticket distribution.

Though speculation suggested that the RJD might contest the Kutumba seat, currently held by Bihar Congress president Rajesh Kumar Ram, the party refrained, possibly to avoid a direct clash with its ally. However, that decision has not prevented tensions from flaring elsewhere, as both parties have fielded candidates against each other in multiple constituencies.

RJD Chief Lalu Prasad Yadav and former Bihar deputy chief minister Tejashwi Yadav PHOTO: PTI

High-profile names in RJD's list

The RJD's list features several high-profile names, including Tejashwi Yadav (Raghopur), Alok Mehta (Ujiyarpur), Mukesh Raushan (Mahua), and Akhtarul Islam Shahin (Samastipur)—all sitting MLAs defending their seats. Lalu Prasad's long-time aide, Bhola Yadav, will attempt to reclaim Bahadurpur, a seat he lost in 2020.

Former Speaker Awadh Bihari Chaudhary will contest again from Siwan after a humiliating Lok Sabha defeat last year, while ex-education minister Chandrashekhar returns from Madhepura, despite recent controversies over his remarks on Hindu texts.

RJD fields more women

RJD continues to prioritise its traditional "MY" (Muslim-Yadav) voter base but has also sought to diversify its social representation by awarding tickets to OBC and upper caste candidates. Notably, the party has fielded 21 women, more than either the JD(U) or BJP.

However, the RJD's embrace of candidates with criminal pasts remains unchanged. Don-turned-politician Bogo Singh will contest from Matihani, while Osama Shahab, son of the late strongman Mohd Shahabuddin, will debut from Raghunathpur in Siwan. In Mokama, Veena Devi, wife of gangster-politician Suraj Bhan Singh, is set to battle Anant Singh. Dynastic politics also continues, with London-educated Shivani Shukla, daughter of Munna Shukla, contesting from Lalganj.

Cong's poor candidate choice

Meanwhile, Congress faces mounting criticism over its candidate selection.

Several senior leaders have slammed the leadership for ignoring strong contenders and favouring failed candidates. "There's no uniform criterion," said veteran leader Tariq Anwar. "Candidates who lost narrowly in 2020 have been dropped, while others who suffered major defeats have been given tickets again."

One glaring omission is Gajanand Prasad Sahi, who lost Barabigha by fewer than 200 votes but was not re-nominated.

In contrast, Amit Kumar Tunna (Riga) and Jayesh Mangalam Singh (Bagaha), both defeated by over 25,000 votes, have been fielded again.

A senior Congress leader, speaking anonymously, admitted that poor ground-level assessment had led to undeserving nominations. *—PTI*

Tej booked for poll violation

RJD supremo Lalu Prasad's elder son and Janshakti Janta Dal chief Tej Pratap Yadav has been booked for allegedly violating the model code of conduct during the filing of his nomination papers from the Mahua assembly seat in Bihar's Vaishali district. Mahua' circle officer lodged a complaint after viral video showed Yadav using a SUV, bearing a police logo and a beacon light, during a procession. *—PTI*

RJD's Chhuria to contest bypoll

BJD candidate Snehangini Chhuria filed her nomination for the Nuapada assembly bypoll in Odisha, supported by senior party leaders like opposition chief whip Pramila Mallik. Before filing, she prayed at the Lord Shiva temple in Telipada. The by-election follows the death of sitting MLA Rajendra Dholakia. Chhuria, a former minister and two-time MLA, was selected after Dholakia's son joined the BJP. *—PTI*

Jyoti to contest from Karakat

Bhojpuri star-turned-politician Pawan Singh's estranged wife Jyoti Singh on Monday filed her nomination papers from Bihar's Karakat assembly seat as an Independent candidate. She had recently met Jan Suraaj founder Prashant Kishor in Patna amid speculations she may get a ticket of the party in the upcoming polls. She appealed for help from several leaders regarding her marital discord. *—PTI*

J&K bypolls: NC fields DDC member

JAMMU, 20 OCT

The National Conference (NC) has fielded District Development Council (DDC) member Shamim Begum from the Nagrota assembly constituency for next month's bypoll after the Congress decided not to contest, citing a 'larger goal' of defeating the BJP.

NC provincial president Rattan Lal Gupta said Begum, who represents Nagrota's Dansal block, will file her nomination papers soon. Begum thanked the leadership for its trust and said voters were familiar with her work as a DDC member.

The Congress, which had allied with NC in last year's assembly polls, said it stepped aside in the coalition's broader interest.

"The decision was made to strengthen secular forces and defeat the BJP," party spokesperson Ravinder Sharma said.

The BJP has fielded Devyani Rana, daughter of late MLA Devender Singh Rana, whose death last year necessitated the by-election. Bypolls for Nagrota and Budgam will be held on 11 November. *—PTI*

PM celebrates Deepavali onboard INS Vikrant

PANAJI, 20 OCT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi celebrated Deepavali with naval personnel onboard aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, which he described as a towering symbol of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India).

Modi arrived here on 19 September and boarded the home-built aircraft carrier off the coast of Goa.

While onboard INS Vikrant, the Prime Minister went to the Flightdeck, surrounded by MiG 29K fighter aircraft.

He witnessed the takeoff and landing of MiG 29 fighter jets on a short runway of the aircraft carrier.

Modi also witnessed a vibrant cultural programme where the officers and sailors of the Indian Navy sang various patriotic songs, including a song specially written by them to commemorate the success of Indian Armed Forces in Operation Sindoor.

Modi had dinner with the extended family of naval personnel during the Bara Khana.

On Monday, Modi joined a Yoga Session and also witnessed a spectacular steam-past of warships and flypast by aircraft.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi offers sweets to naval personnel aboard INS Vikrant during Diwali PHOTO: PTI

He delivered an inspiring address to the Navy personnel and also gave them sweets.

PM Modi said that the name Brahmos strikes fear in some minds and now many countries are keen to buy these missiles.

"My Deepavali has been special as it was spent amongst you," he said.

Modi also said that India is on the verge of eradicating Naxal-Maoist terror and over 100 districts freed from this scourge will celebrate Diwali with dignity this year.The security forces reduced Maoist influence to 11 districts, from 125 a decade ago. *—PTI*

Kerala joining PM SHRI shows CPI(M), BJP pact: Cong

T'PURAM, 20 OCT

Kerala Congress Chief Sunny Joseph on Monday claimed that the state government's decision to join the Centre's PM SHRI scheme was proof of a "secret alliance" between the ruling CPI (M) and the BJP.

The Marxist party's long-standing covert relationship has now come out in the open now, he alleged.

Expressing support for the CPI leaders who voiced their reservation about the Education Department's decision, the KPCC president sought to know whether they would stand by their stance.

Accusing the CPI (M) of "dominating" the LDF, he called on other parties in the front to state their position on the matter.

Joseph said the CPI(M) received political favours and other benefits from the BJP, and asked CM Pinarayi Vijayan whether the matter would be discussed in the Cabinet.LDF Convenor T P Ramakrishnan said the ruling front's stance is to ensure the state received the funds. *—PTI*

US President Donald Trump said seven planes were shot down duirng the Indo-Pak face-off PHOTO: PTI

Ended Indo-Pak war: Trump claims credit

- In a recent Fox News interview, Trump stated that the "threat of tariffs" was key in bringing the two nuclear nations to a halt, asserting, "They were going at it… and that could have been a nuclear war."

WASHINGTON, 20 OCT

US President Donald Trump has once again asserted that he played a crucial role in resolving the conflict between India and Pakistan, claiming that seven planes were shot down during the hostilities, though he did not clarify their national affiliations.

In a recent Fox News interview, Trump stated that the "threat of tariffs" was key in bringing the two nuclear nations to a halt, asserting, "They were going at it… and that could have been a nuclear war."

He claimed that Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif praised him for his intervention, stating, "The Prime Minister of Pakistan actually just said, Donald Trump, President Trump, saved millions of lives by getting that."

Trump detailed that he had threatened to impose 200 per cent tariffs on both countries, which he claimed forced them to cease hostilities: "We're going to put on 200 tariffs, which will make it impossible for you to deal, and we're not going to do business with you." He added, "And after 24 hours, I settled the war."

Trump has repeated his assertion of having "helped settle" the conflict. India maintains that the ceasefire resulted from direct talks between the two nations' military authorities. *—PTI*

Sudhakaran is CPI(M)'s emotion: Minister says no rift

KOCHI, 20 OCT

Kerala Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian denied reports of a rift between senior CPI(M) leader G Sudhakaran and the party leadership in Alappuzha, describing the veteran as an "emotion" of CPI(M) workers on Monday.

Cherian said Sudhakaran has every right to criticise him and that their personal bond remains strong.

"He is one of the most prominent leaders of CPI(M) and will remain part of the party till his last breath," he said.

Explaining Sudhakaran's reduced public role, Cherian said it was due to age-related limits within the party, not any differences. "The party will continue to entrust him with responsibilities," he added.

Cherian would meet Sudhakaran if required. "If there has been any misunderstanding, I retract my statements," he said. *—PTI*

Accused in Telangana cop's murder shot dead

HYDERABAD, 20 OCT

A 24-year-old man, Shaik Riyaz, accused of stabbing a constable to death in Telangana's Nizamabad district, was shot dead by police on Monday while allegedly attempting to escape.

According to preliminary reports from the DGP office, Riyaz snatched a police officer's pistol and tried to fire at them while fleeing from custody at Nizamabad government hospital.

The incident follows Riyaz's earlier attack on Constable Pramod, who succumbed to injuries inflicted by a knife to the chest on 17 October. A Sub-Inspector also sustained finger injuries during the altercation.

DGP B Shivadhar Reddy paid tribute to Constable Pramod, affirming the Telangana police's commitment to law and order and promising to take a tough stance against criminals.

Shaik Riyaz PHOTO: ANI

He announced an ex-gratia payment of Rs 1 crore, a government job for a family member, and a 300sqft house plot for the kin of the deceased police personnel. *—Agencies*

BONDING OVER SWEETS

Rahul makes 'laddoo' at 200-yr-old Delhi shop

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday put out a video of him trying his hand at making 'imarti' and 'besan laddoo' at the famous 200-year-old Ghantewala sweet shop in old Delhi, as he greeted people on Diwali and asked them to share how they are making the festival special.

Gandhi posted the video on X and said the true sweetness of Diwali lies not just in the 'thali', but also in relationships and community.

"Tried my hand at making imarti and besan laddoo at the famous and historic Ghantewala sweet shop in old Delhi," the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha said.

"The sweetness of this centuries-old, iconic shop remains the same - pure, traditional, and heartwarming," Gandhi said.

Rahul Gandhi tries his hand at making imartis at Ghantewala shop in Chandni Chowk in Old Delhi during Diwali on Monday PHOTO: PTI

"Tell us, how are you celebrating your Diwali and making it special?" he said.

In another post on X, Gandhi extended greetings to the people of the country on the auspicious occasion of Diwali.

- "Tried my hand at making imarti and besan laddoo at the famous and historic Ghantewala sweet shop in old Delhi," the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha said.

"May India be illuminated with the lamps of joy, may the light of happiness, prosperity, and love spread in every home," the former Congress president said.

The shop owner tells Gandhi they had served his grandmother and former prime minister Indira Gandhi, father and also former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi and other members of the family and is waiting to supply sweets for his marriageE. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Assam cops reach Singapore to probe Zubeen's death

GUWAHATI, 20 OCT

Two senior Assam police officials, CID special DGP Munna Prasad Gupta and Titabor co-district SP Tarun Goel reached Singapore on Monday to investigate the death of singer Zubeen Garg. Gupta is heading the special investigation team probing the singer's death, while Goel is a member of the nine-member group. A source said the two SIT members will visit the place of occurrence where Garg had breathed his last. Besides, the Assam Police team will sit with their counterparts in Singapore to discuss the case. The celebrated singer died under mysterious circumstances in Singapore on 19 September while swimming in the sea. He had gone there to attend the North East India Festival. *—PTI*

Self-styled godman held for raping Cuttack girl

CUTTACK, 20 OCT

A self-styled godman was arrested in Odisha's Cuttack district for allegedly sexually assaulting a seven-year-old girl, police said on Monday. The incident happened in the Kendupatna area when the girl was going to a shop near her house to buy some items. The accused, a 50-year-old man, lured her with chocolates and took her to a nearby mutt and sexually assaulted her on 18 September. The accused reportedly runs an ashram. A case was registered under various sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act after a complaint lodged by the victim. After the incident locals reportedly assaulted him and he was rescued by the police, who also arrested him. *—PTI*

Trucker sexually harasses techie in Kerala hostel; held

T'PURAM, 20 OCT

An IT professional who was sexually harassed in her Kazhakoottam hostel room on 17 October has identified the accused, Benjamin (35) of Madurai, police said. A lorry operator transporting cargo from Chennai, Benjamin allegedly entered the hostel through an open door and harassed the victim while she slept. He fled when she resisted. CCTV footage and vehicle data helped police trace him to Kollam, where he was trapped with assistance from Tamil Nadu police. Benjamin, involved in five prior theft cases, had reportedly scouted houses for burglary before targeting the hostel. He was produced before court and remanded in judicial custody. Police will seek his custody for further investigation. *—PTI*

Canadian paraglider lost in Himachal traced

DHARAMSHALA, 20 OCT

The 27-year-old Canadian traveller who had gone missing while paragliding in the Dhauladhar ranges of Himachal Pradesh' Kangra district has been located, authorities said on Monday. Megan Elizabeth Roberts was paragliding when she crash landed in the mountains. She had taken a solo flight from Bir-Billing on 17 October. A search operation was launched on the basis of the coordinates she had sent through her satellite phone. A team on foot reached the site at 13,000 feet where the paraglider landed after the crash. The operation was being led by the Billing Paragliding Association and local administration. Four sorties were carried out by a private chopper on 19 October to look for Roberts. Whether the paraglider is alive is not yet known. *—PTI*

DEEPAVALI SMOG SMOTHERS DELHI

34 out of 38 stations in 'red zone' as SC lifts cracker ban

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

TheDelhi's air quality deteriorated on Diwali, with 34 out of 38 monitoring stations recording pollution levels in the 'red zone' on Monday, indicating 'very poor' to 'severe' air across the national capital.

Delhi's 24-hour average air quality index (AQI), which is reported at 4pm every day, remained in the 'very poor' category at 345, higher than the 326 recorded on Sunday, according to official data.

According to the SAMEER app developed by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), four monitoring stations were already in the 'severe' category with AQI levels above 400 -- Dwarka (417), Ashok Vihar (404), Wazirpur (423) and Anand Vihar (404).

Around 30 monitoring stations reported 'very poor' air, with AQI levels above 300.

In the afternoon, 31 out of 38 stations recorded 'very poor' air quality, while three stations fell under the 'severe' zone, data showed.

The air quality is expected to slip into the 'severe' category more widely on Tuesday and Wednesday. Transport emissions contributed 15.6 per cent to Delhi's air pollution on Monday, while other factors, including industries, accounted for 23.3 per cent, data from the Decision Support System (DSS) showed.

On Sunday, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) invoked Stage II of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) across Delhi-NCR. On 15 October, the Supreme Court allowed the sale and bursting of green firecrackers in Delhi-NCR between 6am and 7pm and again from 8pm to 10pm on Deepavali. *—PTI*

WHAT IS GRAP AND WHY HAS IT BEEN IMPLEMENTED?

The GRAP is a step-by-step emergency plan designed to curb rising air pollution in Delhi-NCR. It has four stages, each triggered when air quality crosses specific thresholds. When the AQI slips into the "very poor" range (301–400), Stage II comes into effect.

Here's what changes on the ground when Stage II is enforced:

- Dust control: Roads are cleaned more frequently using mechanical or vacuum sweepers, and water sprinkling is done before rush hours to reduce dust.
- Construction watch: Inspectors conduct more checks at construction and demolition sites to ensure proper dust control and covering of materials.
- Transport boost and restrictions: The government adds more CNG and electric buses and increases metro frequency to reduce private vehicle use. Also, entry of inter-state buses is restricted to those running on CNG, electric, or BS-VI diesel.
- No open burning: Resident welfare associations (RWAs) are told to provide electric heaters to guards and workers so they don't burn wood or waste for warmth.

What is Delhi's AQI today: 345

AQI classification

AQI Range	Category	Air Quality
0–50	Good	Healthy
51–100	Satisfactory	Acceptable
101–200	Moderate	Some health concern
201–300	Poor	Sensitive groups affected
301–400	Very Poor	Health warning
401–500	Severe	Serious health impact

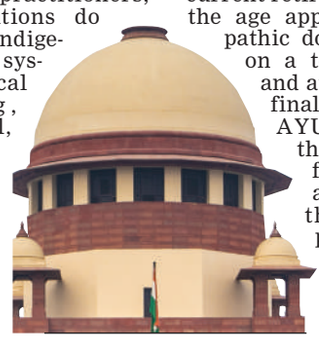
New SC bench to hear on AYUSH parity

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

The Supreme Court has referred to a larger bench the question of whether doctors practising Ayurveda, Unani, and Homeopathy can be treated on par with allopathic doctors in matters of service conditions, pay scales, and retirement age.

A bench of Justice BR Gavai and Justice K Vinod Chandran, which had reserved its verdict on 13 May, said in its 17 October order that there was a 'divergence of opinion' on the issue, warranting an authoritative pronouncement.

The court noted that while states have justified a higher retirement age for allopathic doctors to tackle shortages of experienced practitioners, similar conditions do not exist in indigenous medical systems. "Critical life-saving, interventional, and surgical care is not carried out by practitioners of indigenous medicine," the bench observed.



Pending the larger bench's decision, states may allow AYUSH practitioners to continue service beyond their current retirement age, up to the age applicable to allopathic doctors, but only on a temporary basis and at half pay. If the final verdict favours AYUSH doctors, they will receive full pay and allowances for the extended period; otherwise, the interim pay will be adjusted against pension dues.

The bench was hearing 31 petitions, including one by Ayurvedic practitioners represented by Ashwini Upadhyaya, while Solicitor General Tushar Mehta appeared for the Rajasthan government.

The case originated after the Rajasthan High Court ruled in 2023 that AYUSH doctors were entitled to the same retirement age of 62 years as allopathic doctors, terming the distinction 'discriminatory.' The state appealed the ruling, prompting the Supreme Court's intervention. *—PTI*

IMD issues cyclone alert for Andaman & Nicobar Islands

PORT BLAIR, 20 OCT

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a 'cyclone alert' in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, triggered by a cyclonic circulation over the Bay of Bengal expected to intensify from 21 October.

Local port warnings have been issued, with heavy rainfall forecasted until 23 October. An official stated, "Heavy rain (7-11cm) is very likely at one or two places over Nicobar Islands. Thunderstorms with gusty winds (40-50km) and lightning are also expected over the islands on 21, 22, and 23 October.

In conjunction with this alert, a low-pressure system is predicted to form over the Southeast Bay of Bengal, which may lead to heavy rainfall exceeding 100mm in parts of Tamil Nadu. The IMD has warned of light to moderate rain, accompanied by thunderstorms, on Deepavali day in the state. Areas such as Erode, Nilgiris, Coimbatore, and Madurai are likely to experience significant showers.

The IMD advised fishermen not to venture into the Andaman Sea, as sea conditions are expected to be rough, advising all boat owners and tourists to exercise utmost caution in the coming days. *—PTI*

23 Indians rescued from burning ship

DJIBOUTI CITY, 20 OCT

A total of 23 Indian crew members from the MV Falcon were rescued after the Cameroon-flagged tanker caught fire following an explosion while adrift off the Yemen coast. The vessel was sailing southeast of Aden, Yemen, fully loaded with liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), en route to Djibouti.

Upon receiving a distress signal from the ship's master, the UNAVFOR ASPIDES conducted a search and rescue operation. The MV MEDA successfully rescued 24 crew members, one Ukrainian and the 23 Indians.

The vessel was sailing southeast of Aden, Yemen, fully loaded with liquefied petroleum gas **PHOTO: ANI**

The MV Falcon was escorted to the Port of Djibouti, where the rescued seafarers were handed over to the Djiboutian Coast Guard. Two crew members remain unaccounted for, and authorities have warned vessels to keep a safe distance due to explosion risks. *—PTI*

3 KILLED AS ACCIDENT TRIGGERS CLASH IN GUJARAT

RAJKOT, 20 OCT

Three persons were killed after two groups clashed following a minor road accident in Gujarat's Rajkot city in the early hours of Monday.

The clash occurred in the Ambedkar Nagar area in Rajlot around 12.30am, after a motorcycle collided with another vehicle, Assistant Commissioner of Police BJ Chaudhary said.

After the accident, two groups attacked each other with knives, daggers, and sticks. Three people, including two brothers, died, while three others were injured, police said.

The deceased were identified as Arun Barot and brothers Suresh and Vijay Parmar, and they all belonged to rival groups.

Police have started questioning residents of the area to track down those involved in the clash. *—PTI*

7 MANIPUR POWER WORKERS ASSAULTED

IMPHAL, 20 OCT

Seven employees of the Manipur State Power Company Limited (MSPCL), including the officer-in-charge of the 33/11 kV Tuila sub-station, were allegedly assaulted by unidentified individuals on 18 October at a sub-station in Churachandpur district. The attack occurred within the sub-station complex, though the motive remains unclear. MSPCL condemned the 'brutal assault' and demanded a swift and transparent investigation, urging authorities to apprehend those responsible. The incident takes place amid ongoing ethnic violence in Manipur between Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities, which has left 260 people dead. *—PTI*

DESPITE ECONOMIC GROWTH

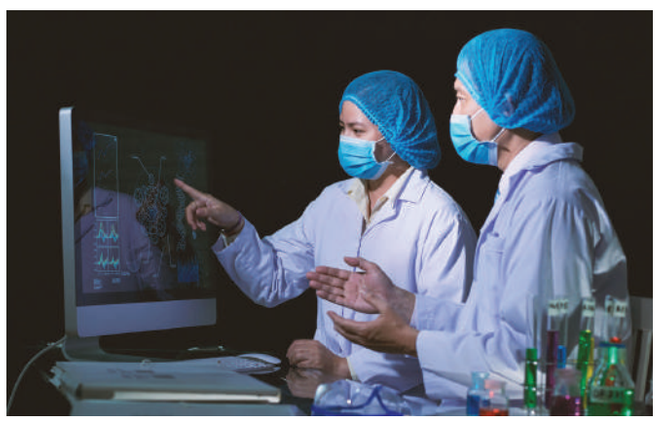
India lags in cancer research since 2001

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

India has shown inconsistent growth in cancer-related clinical research despite strong economic expansion, indicating that development alone may not bridge disparities in research output among low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), a new study has found.

Published in the journal CANCER, the study analysed data from the World Bank and ClinicalTrials.gov between 2001 and 2020 to examine how economic trends influence the number and complexity of cancer clinical trials. Researchers from the Latin American Cooperative Oncology Group noted that most trials remain concentrated in high-income countries.

Globally, 16,977 cancer clinical trials were registered in LMICs over the 20-year period, rising from 1,053 (2001–2005) to 7,661 (2016–2020). In India, 54 trials were registered in the early 2000s, growing to 126 by 2016–2020, with a total of 506 over the study period.



Only China and South Korea were found to have developed independent, high-complexity clinical research ecosystems **PHOTO: FREEPIK**

"Clinical research development has been unequal among LMICs. Strong economic growth could be a contributing factor but only to some extent," the authors noted.

Only China and South Korea were found to have developed independent, high-complexity clinical research ecosystems. In contrast, countries such as India, Thailand, and Vietnam showed inconsistent progress despite robust economic performance.

South American nations including Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico recorded higher trial numbers despite relative economic stagnation. In Africa, Egypt showed growth aligned with its economy, while South Africa did not.

"These data reinforce the need for initiatives to support cancer research in LMICs," said Max S Mano, senior author of the study. *—PTI*

Sabarimala row: SIT to submit 1st report to HC

PATHANAMTHITTA, 20 OCT

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the alleged loss of gold from Sabarimala temple is expected to submit its first progress report to the Kerala High Court soon, possibly on Tuesday.

A division bench of Justices Raja Vijayaraghavan and KV Jayakumar will hear the case, in which the SIT was directed to file an update within two weeks and complete the full probe within six.

Police sources said the report will provide details on the current status of the investigation, including the recent arrest of Bengaluru-based Unnikrishnan Potty, who sponsored the 2019 electroplating of gold-clad copper plates on Dwarapalaka idols and Sreekovil door frames. The report will also outline investigative actions taken in Chennai, where the plating work was carried out.

The SIT has registered two separate cases naming up to ten accused, including Potty and officials of the Travancore Devaswom Board, with further interrogations expected in the coming days. Retired High Court judge Justice KT Sankaran, serving as amicus curiae to prepare an inventory of the shrine's valuables, is also expected to submit a preliminary report to the court this week. Meanwhile, Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) President Sunny Joseph alleged that the government is deliberately delaying the probe and shielding the accused, drawing sharp political criticism. *—PTI*

Festival of lights

Skies across the nation come alive to mark the start of Deepavali as people lit up the night in style.(From left to right) Ayodhya sets a Guinness World Record by lighting 26,17,215 diyas during Deepotsav; Fireworks illuminate the skies over Kolkata as locals celebrate Kali Puja; A woman lights earthen lamps in Assam's Baksa district; and holiday rush leads to massive crowds at Patna railway station throwing normal life out of gear for a few.

Kerala's fight to erase extreme poverty

Four years ago, at just 24, Remya P's life seemed to be falling apart. She was a widow, a cancer patient, and a mother of two small children with no job and no safe place to call home.

Living in Chavara village in Kerala's southern Kollam district, she faced daily struggles. Her fight was not just against the disease, but also against joblessness, the constant worry of how to pay for treatment and keep a roof over her family's head.

Her fortunes changed when local panchayat authorities came to know about her plight. They identified her as a beneficiary of the state government's Extreme Poverty Eradication Project (EPEP), a scheme designed to help those in the most dire circumstances.

Today, she is a cancer survivor. She has a steady job working at a panchayat helpdesk and, crucially, her family now lives securely in a house provided by the government's LIFE housing programme.

Her story is one of survival, made possible by a helping hand when she needed it most.

A mass grassroots-level multidimensional initiative to root out extreme poverty, the EPEP seeks to ensure that no person remains "extremely poor" and is left behind in the state's development trajectory.

Spearheaded by the Local Self Government Department, the flagship programme envisions achieving the goal by addressing food, income, health, education and shelter as critical distress factors of vulnerable people.

After uplifting over 64,006 families living under extremely poor conditions in the state by ensuring them uninterrupted supply of food, healthcare, a source of livelihood and safe housing, Kerala is now all set to be declared as the first "extreme poverty-free state" in the country on 1 November, the state formation day.

LSGD Minister MB Rajesh said it is a proud moment for the state as Kerala stands first in the country and second in the world after China in terms of successful eradication of extreme poverty.

"The EPEP was the first decision taken by the first Cabinet of the present LDF government. It was envisaged as a five-year plan to eradicate extreme poverty," he said.

PHOTO: AI

The 64,006 families, comprising 1,03,099 individuals, identified as extremely poor through a statewide survey, have now been uplifted by addressing the parameters of food, health, education, livelihood income and housing, the minister explained.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who conceptualised the project, coordinated various departments in this regard and reviewed its progress at each stage. The integration of various social security schemes of the government and convergence of the activities of various departments at one point through the chief minister was the reason for the success of EPEP, Rajesh said.

Rajesh said the most marginalised and vulnerable sections of the society, including nomads, who did not even know about the existing government programmes or have no idea how to apply for them, have been identified and covered under the initiative.

"Microplans, in accordance with the needs of each family, have been prepared. For some families, medical care is the priority. For others, it is food," he said.

A grassroots-level survey carried out to identify the beneficiaries showed that 35 per cent of such households faced income deprivation, 24 per cent experienced health-related issues, 21 per cent encountered food deprivation, and 15 per cent were deprived of shelter.

During the initial phase of implementation of EPEP, the main focus was on addressing food and health deprivation, he said. Uninterrupted distribution of both cooked food and food kits, access to medicines, doorstep treatment, palliative care, and even organ transplantation were ensured to the needy among identified beneficiaries.

The biggest challenge faced in the implementation of EPEP was finding land for the landless and homeless, he said.

Coordinated efforts have resulted in the completion of a total of 7,083 safe shelters across the state by the end of September this year.

Rajesh admitted that the upliftment of extremely poor families does not mean that more people would not fall into the category. "The government is now mulling a project to ensure the continuation of the programme." —*PTI*

SALAR ساہر

The fascinating history of famous art heists

The world's largest art museum, the Louvre has approximately half a million objects in its collection, with about 30,000 on display, and sees on average 8 million visitors per year. That's big on any scale, with a lot of people and objects to keep watch over. And Sundays are particularly busy.

In a cleverly conceived operation, four men wearing fluorescent vests pulled up at the Louvre in a flat-decked truck at 9.30 Sunday morning. Quickly setting to work, they raised an extendable ladder to the second storey. They then cut through a window, entered the Galerie d'Apollon and, brandishing power tools, helped themselves to nine exquisite objects.

The objects taken were France's royal jewels, formerly belonging to the Empress Eugénie, Napoleon III's wife and arts patron.

What can you do with these priceless objects? They can't wear them – too big and glitzy to go unnoticed – and they can't sell them legitimately, as images are all over the internet.

The best-case scenario, for the thieves is to break them down, melt the precious metals and sell the gems.

Empress Eugenie's crown, which the perpetrators took and subsequently dropped as they fled the scene on motor scooters, contains eight gold eagles, 1,354 brilliant-cut diamonds, 1,136 rose-cut diamonds and 56 emeralds.

For the Louvre, any heist is a major blow. It calls into question their security, both electronic and human. Five security staff were nearby who acted to protect visitors and the alarms did ring, but the entire heist was completed within seven minutes.

In 2019, an 18-karat gold toilet titled America (2016), from the artist Maurizio Cattelan, was stolen from Blenheim Palace, England. It was taken in five and a half minutes. It weighed 98kg and was fully functioning. In other words, the two men who took it (and were later caught) worked quickly and efficiently. At the time, as gold bullion it was estimated to be valued at A$6 million.

PHOTO: LOUVRE

Van Gogh's painting The Parsonage Garden at Neunen in Spring (1884) was stolen from the Singer Laren Museum, in the Netherlands, during their 2020 Covid closure. It was recovered in late 2023 after an investigation by Dutch art detective Arthur Brand.

The 2017 theft of two Gottfried Lindauer paintings from Auckland's International Art Centre took just a few minutes to complete. The thieves ram-raided the front window of the auction house where the paintings, valued at NZ$1 million, were displayed. The portraits were recovered five years later.

RECOVERING OBJECTS

The National Gallery of Victoria's Picasso painting Weeping Woman (1937) was famously taken by the Australian Cultural Terrorists in 1986 – but only noticed as missing two days later.

Recovered just over two weeks later, the painting was left for the gallery staff to collect in a locker at Spencer Street railway station. The motivation behind the theft was to highlight the lack of financial support given to Victorian artists, but the true identity of the thieves remains a mystery.

In 1986, 26 paintings of religious subjects were stolen from the gallery at the Benedictine Monastery at New Norcia, Western Australia.

But the thieves hadn't factored in that three men and the stash of paintings couldn't fit into a Ford Falcon. The paintings were cut from their frames, ostensibly butchered. One was completely destroyed. The thieves were caught and charged.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Recovery of objects from heists is low. It's impossible to put a number on but some say art recoveries globally are possibly as low as 10 per cent.

Never say never. The Mona Lisa (1503), the main attraction at the Louvre, was stolen in 1911 and recovered two years later. The thief, Vincenzo Peruggia, was an Italian handyman working at the Louvre and was caught trying to sell it.

This latest heist at the Louvre highlights the vulnerability of objects in public collections.

Those who guard objects are usually paid a minimum wage and yet they are tasked with a huge responsibility. When budget cuts are made, it's often security staff that are reduced – such as the Art Gallery of New South Wales' announcement just last week. —*The Conversation*

LETTERS

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Film stars fight AI misuse to reclaim 'themselves'

In a digital landscape increasingly distorted by AI-generated deception, India's top film stars are making a beeline to courts to reclaim ownership of their most valuable asset — "themselves".

A growing list of Bollywood artists, including Amitabh Bachchan, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Akshay Kumar, and Hrithik Roshan, are filing lawsuits to enforce their "personality rights."

This legal approach is a direct response to the alarming surge in sophisticated AI-driven deep fakes and the unauthorised commercial use of their images, voices, and photographs.

For these actors, the threat goes beyond a simple advertisement without permission. As technology makes it easier to create hyper-realistic, yet entirely fabricated, images and videos, the potential for reputational damage has become "truly alarming," a point recently underscored by the Bombay High Court while granting protection to actors Akshay Kumar and Suniel Shetty.

"More than misuse for commercial purposes, what is more worrying and threatening is deepfake images and content," Advocate Janay Jain, who represented a group of celebrities in the Bombay High Court, said.

"Such content causes grave harm to the person's reputation and image," Jain opined.

Personality rights grant an individual legal control over the commercial and public use of their identity — their name, image, voice, signature, or any other distinctive attribute easily recognised by the public.

Misuse can range from fake endorsements and unauthorised merchandise to the most insidious threat — malicious AI-generated deepfakes.

While India lacks a specific, codified law on personality rights, courts are stepping up, broadening the definition of the fundamental right to privacy by issuing injunctions and restraining the misuse of an artist's persona without due permission.

"What we are witnessing now is not just a trend but a necessary evolution where artists are finally asserting control over their persona," said Advocate Sana Raees Khan, who appeared for singer Kumar Sanu.

"They know that their identity is their property and right," Khan observed.

The lawyer said that celebrities, galvanised by the rise of digital media, are now more aware of the legal and commercial value of their identity. This wave of litigation is about setting boundaries and ensuring that the public image, earned through years of gruelling work, isn't exploited by others for profit, Khan added.

"The right to publicity and right to personality are extensions of an individual's right to privacy guaranteed under the Constitution of India," Khan said, adding that a person has exclusive control over the commercial use of their name, image, voice and other distinctive attributes of their identity.

The fight for personality rights isn't entirely new, says Jain and referred to a 2001 case filed by noted Punjabi singer Daler Mehendi and superstar Rajnikanth in 2015.

In 2001, Mehendi filed a suit in the Delhi High Court against dolls emulating his flamboyant image being marketed without obtaining proper permission from him or his company.

In 2015, Rajnikanth filed a suit in the Madras High Court against the makers of the movie 'Main hoon Rajinikanth', claiming that the use of his name was infringing upon his personality rights.

However, the recent rush of court action has been aggressive and comprehensive, protecting highly-specific and distinctive attributes, which include Amitabh Bachchan's famous "Computer ji and lock kiya jaye" catchphrase from 'Kaun Banega Crorepati' TV show, Anil Kapoor's signature "Jhakaas" or Jackie Shroff's words "Bhidu and Jackie."

The high courts have also shielded the personality rights of experienced singer Asha Bhosle and singer Arijit Singh from unauthorised use on social media and AI platforms in recent decisions.

As the age of technology becomes increasingly adept at blurring the distinction between fact and fiction, India's stars are making one thing very clear: their image is their own, and they are taking the law to make certain they are the sole proprietors of their own persona. —*PTI*

Tropical storm Fengshen kills 7 in Philippines

MANILA, 20 OCT

Tropical Storm Fengshen killed seven people and forced more than 22,000 people to evacuate as it battered the northern and central Philippines over the weekend before moving into the South China Sea. The storm, called Ramil, brought sustained winds of up to 65kph and triggered flooding and landslides across vulnerable areas. One person drowned on Saturday in Roxas City in Capiz province, where high tide worsened flooding. In Quezon province's Pitogo town, five including two children died when a palm tree, previously burnt, collapsed onto their hut. Nearly 14,000 evacuees remained displaced by Monday. This 18th tropical cyclone to hit the Philippines this year, struck as region were recovering from recent disasters. *—PTI*

TTP militants kill 5 soldiers in Pakistan

PESHAWAR, 20 OCT

At least five soldiers were killed and 11 injured when Taliban militants attacked personnel guarding a state-owned gas company team in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Monday. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) attackers opened fire on soldiers protecting a Sui Northern Gas Pipeline Company crew near Kot Lalu in Dera Ismail Khan district, which borders South Waziristan, officials said. The militants later fled. Injured personnel were transferred to the Combined Military Hospital in Dera Ismail Khan for treatment. Security forces have cordoned off the area and launched a search operation to track down the attackers. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has witnessed a surge in militant attacks in recent years. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Hong Kong cargo crash kills 2 as plane hits water

HONG KONG, 20 OCT

A Boeing 747 cargo aircraft skidded off a runway into the sea while landing at Hong Kong International Airport early Monday, killing two people. The freighter, operated by Turkey-based ACT Airlines and wet-leased from Emirates, was arriving from Dubai around 3.50am when it overshot the north runway. Four crew members were rescued and hospitalised. Police said two people in an airport ground vehicle were killed. Local broadcasters showed the aircraft partially submerged off the airport's sea wall, with its tail section appearing broken off. The north runway remained closed while investigators probe the crash, though the two other runways continued operating. Emirates said there was no cargo aboard. *—PTI*

Centrist Rodrigo Paz wins Bolivia's Presidential polls

LA PAZ, 20 OCT

Centrist senator Rodrigo Paz has secured victory in Bolivia's presidential election, according to preliminary results, galvanising voters disillusioned by a prolonged economic crisis. Official counts indicate that Paz, 58, garnered over 54 per cent of the vote, defeating former right-wing President Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga, who received just over 45 per cent. Paz and his running mate, ex-police Capt Edman Lara, appealed to working-class and rural voters frustrated with two decades of rule by the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party.

While Paz plans to end Bolivia's fixed exchange rate and phase out fuel subsidies, he aims for gradual market reforms to avoid a sharp recession. In contrast, Quiroga proposed a stark shock treatment relying on the IMF. *—PTI*

Gaza ceasefire back after Israeli attacks

Israel briefly halts aid to famine hit region as Trump's envoys arrive

Trucks carrying humanitarian aids wait near the contentious Rafah Crossing for Israeli authorities; people walk through Gaza's rubble on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

JERUSALEM, 20 OCT

Gaza's fragile ceasefire faced its first major test on Sunday as Israeli forces launched a wave of deadly strikes, saying Hamas militants had killed two soldiers. An Israeli security official said the transfer of aid into the territory was halted.

The military later said it resumed enforcing the ceasefire, and the official confirmed that aid deliveries would resume on Monday.

Health officials said at least 36 Palestinians were killed across Gaza, including children. Israel's military said it struck dozens of Hamas targets after its troops came under fire.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu directed the military to take "strong action" against any ceasefire violations but did not threaten to return to war.

A little over a week has passed since the start of the US-proposed ceasefire aimed at ending two years of war. US President Donald Trump said the ceasefire remained in place and "we want to make sure it's going to be very peaceful."

He told reporters aboard Air Force One on Sunday that Hamas has been "quite rambunctious" and "they've been doing some shooting." He suggested that the violence might be the fault of "rebels" within the organisation rather than its leadership.

"It's going to be handled toughly but properly," he said. Trump did not say whether he thought the Israeli strikes were justified, saying "it's under review."

Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner also returned to Israel on Monday, to oversee details of the ceasefire agreement they helped broker. Vice President JD Vance said on Sunday that he may visit Israel in the coming days.

Israel also identified the remains of two hostages released by Hamas overnight: Ronen Engel, a father from Kibbutz Nir Oz, and Sonthaya Oakkharasri, a Thai agricultural worker from Kibbutz Be'eri. *—PTI*

> Israel has violated the ceasefire agreement 80 times, killing 97 Palestinians and wounding 230 others: Gaza Government Media office.

> I call on the Prime Minister to order the IDF to renew full-scale fighting in the Strip at full strength.
>
> —Itamar Ben Gvir, Israeli National Security Minister

> The Prime Minister's decision to halt the offensive in Gaza and to, for the first time, conduct negotiations not under fire is a serious mistake.
>
> —Bezalel Smotrich, Israeli Finance Minister

'Cut up' Donbas, put an end to war: Trump tells Ukraine

WASHINGTON, 20 OCT

US President Donald Trump said that the Donbas region of Ukraine should be "cut up", leaving most of it in Russian hands, to end a war that has dragged on for nearly four years.

"Let it be cut the way it is," he told reporters aboard Air Force One. "It's cut up right now," adding that you can "leave it the way it is right now."

"They can negotiate something later on down the line," he said. But for now, both sides of the conflict should "stop at the battle line -- go home, stop fighting, stop killing people."

"The rest is very tough to negotiate if you're going to say, You take this, we take that," he said. "You know, there are so many different permutations."

Trump's latest comments came after Ukrainian drones struck a major gas processing plant in southern Russia, sparking a fire and forcing it to suspend its intake of gas from Kazakhstan, Russian and Kazakh authorities said on Sunday.

Asked in a Fox News interview which aired on Sunday whether Putin would be open to ending the war "without taking significant property from Ukraine," Trump responded, "Well, he's going to take something."

"They fought and he has a lot of property. He's won certain property," President Trump said. "We're the only nation that goes in, wins a war and then leaves." *—PTI*

Volodymyr Zelenskyy; Donald Trump; Vladimir Putin **PHOTO: X**

TRUMP CURSED, THREW MAP AT ZELENSKYY: REPORT

"Putin will destroy you," Trump reportedly yelled at Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zeleneskyy during their recent White House meeting. The US President also threw a map at Zeleneskyy, urging him to concede territory to Russia during a "shouting match", the Financial Times reported. Trump reportedly also said that the Russian economy was doing great.

FBI on alert after hunting stand found near Don's jet

WASHINGTON, 20 OCT

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) stated that it has launched an investigation after the US Secret Service (USSS) discovered a suspicious hunting stand with a direct line of sight to the area where Trump exits Air Force One at Palm Beach International Airport, Fox News reported, citing officials.

According to Fox News, the elevated stand was found on Thursday during routine security checks ahead of the US President's planned return to West Palm Beach.

FBI Director Kash Patel confirmed that while the structure has not yet been linked to any individual, federal agents are actively investigating.

In July last year, Trump narrowly escaped an assassination attempt on him during his campaign in the run-up to the US Presidential election of 2024. *—ANI*

I am not a king: Trump responds to protests

Demonstrators in inflatable costumes rally on Pennsylvania Avenue during a No Kings protest in Washington **PHOTO: PTI**

WASHINGTON, 20 SEPT

US President Donald Trump reacted Sunday night to the No Kings Day protesters, saying "I am not a king" and works he works his "ass off to make (US) great."

Trump made the comments to reporters before exiting Air Force One at Joint Base Andrews, when asked about the weekend's No Kings demonstrations.

"I looked at the people. They're not representative of this country," Trump said. "I looked at all the brand new signs paid for. I guess it was paid for by (George) Soros and other radical Left lunatics... The demonstrations were very small, very ineffective and the people were whacked out."

Over the weekend, thousands of people took to the streets in the US and several other cities across the world in the second round of the No Kings protests aimed at the Trump administration. *—Salar News*

With new ally, Takaichi back on track to be Japan's 1st woman PM

TOKYO, 20 OCT

Japan's governing party leader, Sanae Takaichi, is back on track to becoming the country's first female Prime Minister, after finding a badly needed replacement for a crucial partner that left her Liberal Democratic Party's coalition.

Takaichi, 64, would replace Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba in Tuesday's parliamentary vote. If she's successful, it would end Japan's three-month political vacuum and wrangling since the coalition's loss in the July parliamentary election.

The moderate Centrist Komeito party split from the LDP after a 26-year-long coalition. The move by Komeito came days after Takaichi's election as President of her party, and it forced her into a desperate search for a replacement to secure votes so that she could become Prime Minister.

The Buddhist-backed Komeito left after raising concerns about her ultraconservative politics and the LDP's lax response to slush fund scandals.

While the leaders of the country's top three Opposition parties failed to unite for a change of government, Takaichi went for a quick fix by teaming up with the most Conservative of them: The Osaka-based Ishin no Kai, or Japan Innovation Party. The two parties are set to sign a coalition agreement on Monday. *—PTI*

Mysterious airstrip appears in Yemen

DUBAI, 20 OCT

A new airstrip is under construction on Zuqar Island, a volcanic isle in the Red Sea off Yemen's coast, as satellite images reveal. This development is likely part of efforts by forces opposed to the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels, who have attacked over 100 ships during the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Situated approximately 90 kilometres from the Houthi-held port of Hodeida, the nearly 2,000-metre runway could enhance aerial surveillance over the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb Strait. Although no group has claimed responsibility for the construction, signals point to Emirati involvement.

"The possibility of a new Yemeni offensive against the Houthis can't be ruled out," said Eleonora Ardemagni, an analyst at the Italian Institute for International Political Studies.

She added, "The countering of Houthis' smuggling activities, with particular regard to weapons, is a more important point in my view." *—PTI*

China's Communist Party begins key meet for new five-year plan

BEIJING, 20 OCT

China's ruling Communist Party (CPC) on Monday began a crucial three-day plenary session to finalise the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026–2030) as the nation faces economic slowdown, rising unemployment, and fallout from US President Donald Trump's tariff war.

According to official data, China's economy grew 4.8 per cent in the last quarter — the weakest since late 2024 — down from 5.2 per cent earlier this year. The slowdown, driven by shrinking exports and subdued domestic demand, has pushed youth unemployment to around 20 per cent.

President Xi Jinping, also CPC General Secretary, presented a work report outlining economic and strategic priorities. The plenum, comprising 370 members, will chart a plan to revive growth, tackle excess industrial capacity, especially in the electric vehicle sector, and offset the impact of Trump's tariffs and export curbs.

The session follows a sweeping anti-corruption purge within the military. Two top generals — He Weidong and Miao Hua — along with seven other senior officers were expelled from the Party and the armed forces for corruption and "serious disciplinary violations." The plenary meet, held ahead of the APEC summit in South Korea, comes amid renewed tension with the US following disputes over rare-earth exports and technology controls. *—PTI*

Chinese President Xi Jinping and other members of the ruling Chinese Communist Party **PHOTO: X**

GONE IN 4 MINUTES

Louvre remained closed day after heist

PARIS, 20 OCT

- The theft about 30 minutes after the museum opened, with visitors already inside, was among the highest-profile museum thefts in living memory.

The Louvre said on Monday it would remain closed a day after historic jewels were stolen from the world's most-visited museum in a daring daylight heist. The museum's staff asked dozens of visitors who were queuing in front of the glass pyramid entrance to leave the site.

In a message posted on the social media, the Louvre said visitors who have booked tickets will be refunded.

On Sunday, thieves rode a basket lift up the Louvre's facade, forced a window, smashed display cases and fled with priceless Napoleonic jewels, officials said. The theft about 30 minutes after the museum opened, with visitors already inside, was among the highest-profile museum thefts in living memory.

It unfolded just 250m from the Mona Lisa, in what Culture Minister Rachida Dati described as a professional, four-minute-long operation.

French Justice Minister Gerald Darmanin acknowledged security failures on Monday.

"One can wonder about the fact that the windows hadn't been secured, about the fact that a basket lift was on a public road," he said on France Inter radio. "Having (previously) been interior minister, I know that we cannot completely secure all places, but what is certain is that we have failed."

Culture Minister Rachida Dati said probe is on based on evidence found at the scene. "We did find a motorcycle and it has a license plate," Dati said on CNews. "I also want to pay tribute to the security officers who prevented the basket lift from being set on fire. One of the criminals tried to set it on fire, but they forced him to flee. This allowed us to recover evidence."

"When the museum was designed, it was not meant to accommodate 10 million visitors," Dati said. *—PTI*

Police officers work inside Paris' Louvre museum, Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

Rupee rises 9P to close at 87.93 against USD

MUMBAI, 20 OCT

The rupee appreciated by 9 paise to close at 87.93 against the US dollar on Monday, supported by foreign fund inflows, lower crude prices, and positive domestic equity markets. The local currency traded between 87.74 and 87.94 before settling higher than Friday's close of 88.02. Forex expert Anil Kumar Bhansali noted RBI's efforts to keep the rupee below 88 and added that optimism around US-China trade talks also aided sentiment. The rupee is expected to trade between 87.70 and 88.30 on Thursday, following a two-day forex market closure for Deepvali. The dollar index rose 0.1 per cent to 98.53, while Brent crude fell 0.36 per cent to $61.07 per barrel. Sensex gained 411 points and Nifty 133 points.—*PTI*

Foreign investors plan ₹50K cr bank investment

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

Foreign investors have announced plans to invest over Rs 50,000 crore in India's finance and banking sectors, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Monday. Goyal described India as an "oasis" amid global economic uncertainty, emphasising that the surge in announced investments reflects growing international confidence in the country's economic stability and long-term growth prospects. Official data show total Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into India rose 15 per cent to USD 18.62 billion in the first quarter of the current fiscal year (April-June). FDI from the United States nearly tripled during the same period, reaching USD 5.61 billion, highlighting strong global interest in India's financial sector. The government continues to focus on attracting substantial foreign capital across priority industries. —*PTI*

'Southern cities see 47% rise in housing sales'

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Chennai recorded a 47 per cent rise in housing sales during July–September, with combined sales reaching 38,644 units, up from 26,284 units a year earlier, according to PropTiger. Hyderabad saw a 53 per cent rise to 17,658 units, Bengaluru grew 18 per cent to 13,124 units, and Chennai more than doubled to 7,862 units. Despite this, overall sales across India's top eight cities dipped 1 per cent to 95,547 units, due to sharp declines in Mumbai (–22 per cent), Pune (–28 per cent), and Delhi-NCR (–21 per cent). Ahmedabad fell 5 per cent, while Kolkata rose 33 per cent. PropTiger, owned by Aurum PropTech, credits steady interest rates and policy reforms for supporting growth. Executive Director Onkar Shetye remains optimistic about the festive quarter amid affordability concerns. —*PTI*

HDFC Bank shares climb nearly 2% post Q2 earnings

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

HDFC Bank shares rose nearly 2 per cent on Monday, touching a 52-week high of Rs 1,020 on both the BSE and NSE, after the lender posted robust second-quarter earnings and strong balance sheet indicators. The country's largest private sector bank reported a 10 per cent year-on-year increase in consolidated net profit to Rs 19,610 crore for the September quarter. On a standalone basis, profit climbed 10.82 per cent to Rs 18,641 crore for the July–September period, driven by healthy loan growth and steady interest income. Total income advanced to Rs 91,040 crore from Rs 85,499 crore a year earlier, reflecting improved business momentum. The bank's asset quality also strengthened, with gross non-performing assets narrowing to 1.24 per cent from 1.36 per cent last year. —*PTI*

Apps go dark as Amazon cloud outage disrupts globe

Snapchat, Perplexity AI, Alexa, Prime Video & Canva hit

SAN FRANCISCO, 20 OCT

Amazon Web Services (AWS) experienced a major outage on Monday, causing widespread disruptions across numerous global platforms, including apps, websites, games, and financial services.

AWS, which powers essential infrastructure for governments, universities, and major corporations, began showing signs of trouble around 3.11am. Eastern Time. Its Health Dashboard reported "increased error rates and latencies" in the US-EAST-1 region. By 6am., Amazon confirmed that most affected services were recovering, with global systems reliant on the region also showing improvement. However, it warned that residual issues may persist as systems catch up on delayed requests.

The outage affected a broad array of services, with spikes reported on outage tracker DownDetector for platforms such as Snapchat, Perplexity AI, Amazon Alexa, Ring, Roblox, Prime Video, Fortnite, Venmo, Chime, Blink, Spectrum, T-Mobile, Signal, Reddit, Steam, Coinbase, Canva, and more. Even Amazon's own website briefly went down, with one user on X commenting, "AWS went down and took half the internet with it."

Many disruptions stemmed from failures in authentication, storage, or API services tied to AWS infrastructure, including DynamoDB and IAM. In enterprise settings, login systems, dashboards, and data-backed apps also saw degraded performance.

AWS noted ongoing issues with launching new EC2 instances—virtual servers hosted on Amazon's cloud, which added to service delays. These virtual machines are vital to running many modern apps and systems.

The CEO of Perplexity AI, Aravind Srinivas, confirmed on X that their outage was due to AWS issues. Canva and Signal also acknowledged the disruption, while Uber rival Lyft's app was down for thousands in the US.

Cybersecurity expert Patrick Burgess from the UK's BCS noted that reliance on a few major cloud providers makes the digital world highly vulnerable to such outages.

While AWS has resolved the core issue, it advised that some delays may continue as backlogged requests are processed. Analysts say this outage highlights the growing risks of centralised cloud infrastructure in the global digital ecosystem. —*Agencies*

AHEAD OF MUHURAT TRADING

Mkts surge for 4th day; Sensex jumps 411 pts

MUMBAI, 20 OCT

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended higher on Monday, taking their winning run to the fourth day in a row, driven by buying in blue-chip Reliance Industries and sustained foreign fund inflows.

A sharp rally in global markets also added to the markets' optimism.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 411.18 points or 0.49 per cent to settle at 84,363.37. During the day, it zoomed 704.37 points or 0.83 per cent to 84,656.56.

The 50-share NSE Nifty surged 133.30 points or 0.52 per cent to 25,843.15.

From the Sensex firms, Reliance Industries climbed 3.52 per cent after the firm on Friday reported a 9.6 per cent year-on-year rise in net profit for the September quarter, driven by strong performance in its consumer-facing retail and telecom businesses and a recovery in its core oil-to-chemicals segment.

Bajaj Finserv, Axis Bank, State Bank of India, Tata Consultancy Services, Titan and Bharti Airtel were also among the gainers.

However, ICICI Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Eternal, Adani Ports and Power Grid were among the laggards.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 308.98 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) also bought stocks worth Rs 1,526.61 crore on the same day.

Stock exchanges BSE and NSE will conduct a special Muhurat trading session on Tuesday.

The symbolic trading session will be held between 1.45pm and 2.45pm. The market will remain closed for regular trading on Tuesday, but a special trading window will be open for one hour. —*PTI*

Avaada Electro plans ₹10,000 crore IPO

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

- Avaada Electro, the solar manufacturing arm of the Brookfield-backed Avaada Group, has confidentially filed preliminary papers with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) for an Initial Public Offering (IPO) expected to raise between Rs 9,000 and Rs 10,000 crore.

Avaada Electro, the solar manufacturing arm of the Brookfield-backed Avaada Group, has confidentially filed preliminary papers with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) for an Initial Public Offering (IPO) expected to raise between Rs 9,000 and Rs 10,000 crore.

According to people familiar with the development, the company is seeking a valuation in the range of Rs 1.10–Rs 1.3 lakh crore. The IPO is likely to comprise both a fresh equity issue and an offer-for-sale by existing shareholders. The funds raised will be primarily directed towards capacity expansion, including the development of a 5.1 GW integrated solar cell and module manufacturing facility in Uttar Pradesh and scaling up operations at its Butibori Super Factory in Maharashtra.

Avaada Electro, a key entity within the diversified clean-energy Avaada Group, plays an important role in India's renewable energy transition. The group, backed by Brookfield Renewable Partners and Thailand's GPSC, raised more than USD 1.3 billion last year to accelerate expansion across solar, green hydrogen, battery storage, and related sustainable technologies.

The Butibori plant near Nagpur, featured on the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy's Approved List of Models and Manufacturers (ALMM), currently operates with 7 GW of module capacity. Producing high-efficiency bifacial glass-to-glass TopCon modules, the company plans to increase total solar module capacity to 13.6 GW and cell capacity to 12 GW by FY27, as part of its broader strategy to establish a fully integrated solar manufacturing hub in India —*PTI*

RBL BANK HITS 5-YR HIGH POST EMIRATES $3B DEAL

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

RBL Bank shares surged over 9 per cent on Monday, closing at Rs 326.85 on the BSE, after news of a proposed USD 3 billion investment from Emirates NBD Bank.

The deal, expected to be the largest FDI in India's financial services sector, is slated to close by June next year pending regulatory and government approvals. Post-investment, RBL Bank will merge with an NBD subsidiary, becoming a "listed foreign bank subsidiary."

Managing Director R Subramaniakumar said the capital infusion will support multi-fold growth, helping the bank expand corporate lending and enter wealth management, aiming to move from a mid-sized to a large bank within three to five years. —*PTI*

DEEPAVALI BONANZA

Gold and silver rebound on safe-haven demand, value buying

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

Gold and silver prices rebounded in the domestic futures market on Monday as investors resumed value buying following a brief correction from record highs, driven by renewed safe-haven demand amid global uncertainties.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures for December delivery rose by Rs 982 or 0.77 per cent to Rs 1,27,990 per 10g. The metal had touched an all-time high of Rs 1,32,294 on Friday before settling at Rs 1,27,008. The February 2026 contract also advanced by Rs 1,680 or 1.31 per cent to Rs 1,29,743 per 10 grams. Last week, gold gained Rs 5,644 or 4.65 per cent.

Silver futures for December delivery jumped Rs 1,522 or 0.97 per cent to Rs 1,58,126 per kilogram. The March 2026 contract rose by Rs 1,292 or 0.82 per cent to Rs 1,59,361. Silver had hit an all-time high of Rs 1,70,415 last week, and is up Rs 10,138 or 6.92 per cent over the past week, supported by industrial demand and tight supplies. Analysts noted persistent safe-haven demand amid geopolitical tensions, concerns over a prolonged US government shutdown, and global trade uncertainty. On Comex, gold futures for December climbed USD 62.46 or 1.48 per cent to USD 4,275.76 per ounce, while silver rose 1.50 per cent to USD 50.85.

Riya Singh of Emkay Global said gold has surged over 65 per cent this year due to central bank buying, ETF inflows, and expectations of US monetary easing. Despite recent corrections, the broader outlook for bullion remains positive. —*PTI*

Reliance shares climb 3%; valuation up by ₹53K cr

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

- Shares of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) surged 3 per cent on Monday following the release of its Q2 results, which showed a 9.6 per cent year-on-year rise in net profit for the July–September quarter

Shares of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) surged 3 per cent on Monday following the release of its Q2 results, which showed a 9.6 per cent year-on-year rise in net profit for the July–September quarter, driven by strong performance across retail, telecom, and its core oil-to-chemicals (O2C) business.

The stock rose 3 per cent to Rs 1,459.90 on the BSE and Rs 1,460.60 on the NSE, adding Rs 53,114.95 crore to RIL's market capitalisation, which now stands at Rs 19.70 lakh crore.

The rally contributed to a broader market uptrend, with the BSE Sensex climbing 438.20 points (0.52 per cent) to 84,390.39 and the NSE Nifty rising 135.40 points (0.55 per cent) to 25,842.35 in early trade.

RIL posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 18,165 crore for Q2 FY26, up from Rs 16,563 crore a year earlier. However, profit fell 33 per cent quarter-on-quarter, compared with Rs 26,994 crore in Q1.

The telecom arm, Jio Platforms Ltd, recorded a 13 per cent rise in profit to Rs 7,379 crore, boosted by strong customer additions, higher average revenue per user (ARPU), and Jio's wireless broadband network becoming the world's largest.

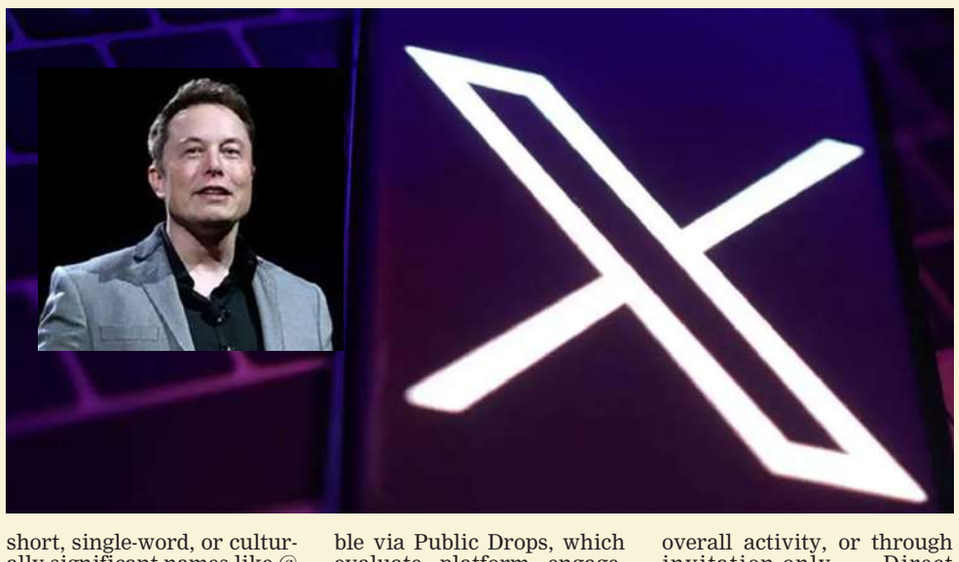
Retail earnings jumped 22 per cent, supported by an improved store operating matrix, while the O2C segment benefited from higher refining margins and record crude oil processing levels.

RIL's diversified strength across consumer and core sectors highlights its resilient earnings trajectory despite quarter-on-quarter fluctuations —*PTI*

JUST FOR PREMIUM+ USERS

X to sell some 'rare' inactive handles for over $2,500

SAN FRANCISCO, 20 OCT



- Elon Musk's social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter, has officially launched the X Handle Marketplace, a new initiative aimed at redistributing inactive or unused usernames to paying subscribers.

Elon Musk's social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter, has officially launched the X Handle Marketplace, a new initiative aimed at redistributing inactive or unused usernames to paying subscribers

The marketplace is currently available only to Premium+ and Premium Business members, establishing a structured system for acquiring highly sought-after digital identities.

Usernames are divided into two categories: "priority" and "rare." Priority handles, typically full names or multi-word combinations such as @GabrielJones or @ParadoxAI, can be requested without additional charges. Rare handles, including short, single-word, or culturally significant names like @Pizza or @One, are accessible via Public Drops, which evaluate platform engagement, contributions, and overall activity, or through invitation-only Direct Purchases. Prices for these premium handles can range from USD 2,500 to seven figures, depending on demand and uniqueness.

Once obtained, usernames cannot be resold or transferred, a move designed to limit unauthorised secondary market trading and increase security.

The launch forms part of Musk's ongoing strategy to monetise X, following paid verification tiers, advertising reforms, and the introduction of Grok, an AI assistant developed by xAI.

While some critics argue that the marketplace may widen the gap between free and paid users, many entrepreneurs, creators, and brands view it as an opportunity to secure memorable usernames that strengthen visibility and engagement. Observers have noted that the initiative raises broader questions about fairness, accessibility, and the criteria used to classify accounts as inactive.

Despite these concerns, the platform sees the marketplace as an "industry-first" step toward creating a more organised economy for digital identity on social media. —*Agencies*

PHOTO: X/@FIFA

Morocco wins its first FIFA U-20 C title

SANTIAGO, 20 OCT

Striker Yassir Zabrini scored twice as Morocco won its first Under-20 World Cup title with a 2-0 victory over Argentina. Zabrini scored in the 12th and 29th minutes of the final on Sunday to help Morocco become the first African nation to win the U20 title since Ghana in 2009. Morocco topped its group against Spain, Brazil, and Mexico and then advanced over South Korea, the United States, and France in the knockout stages. It was the first loss in the tournament for Argentina, which was aiming for its seventh title. Argentina reached the final despite missing its two best players in this age group, Bayer Leverkusen's Claudio Echeverri and Real Madrid's Franco Mastantuono.—*PTI*

Four Indian Greco-Roman wrestlers lose

NOVI SAD, 20 OCT

India's Greco-Roman wrestlers could not win even a single bout on the opening day of the U23 World Championship as all four in action suffered defeats in the opening round, here on Monday.On Tuesday, competition will be held in 55kg, 67kg, 72kg, and 97kg categories.Gaurav (63kg), Ankit (77kg), Rohit Bura (87kg), and Joginder Rathee (130kg) represented India's challenge and lost their respective bouts in an abject manner.Gaurav was up against Kyrgyzstan's Kuttubek A Abdurazakov and lost his 1/8 round bout by technical superiority. Ankit suffered a similar fate against Serbia's Zalan Pek. Rohit fell 0-9 in his Qualification round against America's Payton J Jacobson, while Joginder lost his Qualification bout by fall against Uzbekistan's Damirkhon Rakhmatov.Their progress will now depend on the progress of their vanquishers. —*PTI*

India bag two more Kurash medals at AYG

MANAMA, 20 OCT

Fourteen-year-olds Kanishka Bidhuri and Arvind on Monday secured a silver and a bronze respectively to take India's tally to three medals in the Kurash competition at the Asian Youth Games here. Kanishka settled for a silver in the girls' 52kg category after losing 0-3 by chala to Uzbekistan's Karimova Mubinabonu in the final. Earlier, she had stormed into the title clash with a 10-0 win by khalol over Jalaloddin Setayesh in the semifinals, following a quarterfinal victory by yonbosh against Thailand's Khundee at Exhibition World Bahrain.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X/@POTTER

Sweden names Graham Potter as new coach

DUBAI, 20 OCT

The Swedish Football Association said on Monday that ex-Chelsea manager Graham Potter had been appointed national team coach after Jon Dahl Tomasson was sacked last week following three straight losses in World Cup qualifying. Sweden terminated Tomasson's contract on October 14 after his team only managed to win a single point in the first four games of the qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup. "The goal is to create the optimal conditions to reach the World Cup in the summer of 2026," the Swedish FA said in a statement.—*PTI*

Ronaldo unlikely to travel to India for FC Goa clash

Cristiano Ronaldo
PHOTO: PTI

MARGAO, 20 OCT

Saudi Arabia's top club Al-Nassr is arriving in India Monday night for their AFC Champions League 2 away match against FC Goa, but marquee player Cristiano Ronaldo is unlikely to accompany the visiting team for the game scheduled on 22 October.

According to Saudi Arabia's sports newspaper Al Riyadhiah, the 40-year-old Ronaldo is not going to be a part of the traveling party despite multiple requests from the FC Goa management.

Al-Nassr are bracing up for their third game in the continental club tournament after their comfortable league win over Al-Fateh, and their next match is scheduled to take place at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Fatorda.FC Goa had defeated former AFC Cup winners, Al Seeb, to qualify for ACL 2, and were then drawn alongside Ronaldo's Al Nassr in Group D of the tournament.

Al-Nassr and Indian Super League club FC Goa being drawn in the same group of the continental tournament has raised expectations of the Portuguese superstar making a trip to India for a competitive match. It is understood that his contract with Al-Nassr has a clause giving him the right to pick and choose matches outside Saudi Arabia.

Al-Nassr will be arriving at the Dabolim International Airport. Ronaldo, who is looking to play in next year's World Cup, is also focused on managing his workload and giving himself a chance to compete in the showpiece.

Moreover, Al-Nassr have won both their group-stage fixtures of the Asian AFC Champions League 2 in the absence of Ronaldo, and are poised to advance to the next round. —*PTI*

SUNIL GAVASKAR SLAMS DLS METHOD AFTER INDIA'S LOSS

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

Indian cricket great Sunil Gavaskar has slammed the DLS method, which is used in cricket when rain affects the game. The same method was used during the India vs Australia 1st ODI in Perth on Sunday, where rain interruptions caused the match to be reduced to a 26-overs-a-side affair. Interestingly, after India scored 136/9 in 26 overs, the target for Australia was set at 131. The five-run difference was due to the DLS method. Australia easily chased down the target in 21.1 overs.

"I don't think too many people understand that method, but it's been there for a long time. There was an Indian who had come up with the VJD method, which I thought was a lot better because it made things even for both teams. And the BCCI uses the VJD method in domestic cricket, not sure now," Sunil Gavaskar said on India Today. —*PTI*

Can India find a way to fit Yadav in remaining 2 games?

Every possibility that India will play 2nd ODI with unchanged XI

PERTH, 20 OCT

India's head coach Gautam Gambhir has always been unwavering in his cricketing conviction, and picking multi-skilled players to shore up the batting till number eight is primary among them. So it becomes doubly difficult for a Kuldeep Yadav, with 181 wickets from 113 games, to fit in the head coach's scheme of things at the moment.

Only three 50-over games in Australia aren't a big enough sample size to reach a definitive conclusion on whether Gambhir's punt (not Shubman Gill's) of playing three all-rounders is the way to go forward on those tracks, which offer both bounce and seam movement.

With India scoring only 136 in a game featuring multiple rain stoppages, it would also be unfair to judge the bowling unit, which got very little runs to defend.

But if India play three all-rounders in Nitish Kumar Reddy, Axar Patel, and Washington Sundar, with the last two being specialist finger-spinners, it becomes virtually impossible to fit in the man from Kanpur, who is now 10th in the list of all-time wicket-takers for the country in 50-over cricket.

Formats changed, but the pattern remained identical

And none other than Ravichandran Ashwin feels that this is something that can actually hurt Kuldeep's psyche, where self-doubts start to invariably creep in."Am I the reason team will lose? Kuldeep might think, I am bowling so well, even after that I am not playing, then am I the problem in this team? It is a crushing feeling, and not everyone can handle it. Lot of people lose courage to fight," Ashwin said on his Hindi YouTube channel after India lost the rain-curtailed open- ing game by seven wickets.

Ashwin says if there is a seam bowling all-rounder in Reddy, then there is no reason not to include Kuldeep in the set-up."Having Nitish in the side, if you can't play your best spinner, I don't know," said Ashwin, who doesn't subscribe to the theory that the No. 8 batter will act as a protection to the top-order. Since Kuldeep's debut in 2017, India have played six ODIs Down Under (7 if Perth ODI on Sunday is also counted), and the wily spinner has featured in two of them during the 2018-19 series, grabbing 2 for 54 off 10 overs in one of the games.While batting is a primary reason that Washington Sundar has been picked, being a finger spinner means that over-spin on the deliveries (in simple terms, forward rotation) will help him extract more bounce.

But Washington is a restrictive bowler and not the wicket-taking one.

He believes in choking the run-flow and then getting wickets. —*PTI*

Kuldeep Yadav
PHOTO: PTI

NZ vs ENG, 2nd T20I: England hammers NZ by 65 runs

CHRISTCHURCH, 20 OCT

England punished some lax New Zealand fielding to win the second T20 International by 65 runs in Christchurch on Monday.

After the opening match was washed out, the visitor raced to a mammoth 236 for four from its 20 overs after Black Caps captain Mitchell Santner won the toss and elected to field at Hagley Oval.

England skipper Harry Brook (78) and opener Phil Salt (85) blasted New Zealand to all parts while the host didn't help itself with misfields, errant throwing, and dropped catches.

Wicketkeeper Tim Seifert dropped Jacob Bethell after a top edge swirled high in the strong northwest wind, and later James Neesham put down Brook.

The Brook drop was crucial, with the 26-year-old blasting a brutal 78 from just 35 deliveries as part of a 129-run partnership with Salt.

Brook showed his intent just two balls after he was dropped, smacking a powerful pull shot more than 100 meters over midwicket, the ball landing outside the ground.

He hit six fours and five sixes during his stay, finally falling after mistiming a lofted drive to long-on.

Salt played second fiddle for much of his innings, scoring 85 from 56 balls, rotating the strike before seizing on any loose bowling.

England 236 for 4 (Salt 85, Brook 78) beat New Zealand 171 (Rashid 4-32) by 65 runs. —*PTI*

ICC WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

S Africa aims for a top-two finish with win over Pakistan

COLOMBO, 20 OCT

A semifinal berth already sealed, South Africa will look to maintain their winning momentum and enhance their chances of a top-two finish in the group stage when they take on Pakistan in the ICC Women's World Cup here on Tuesday.

Colombo's weather may play spoilsport again, and the Proteas women, who now have eight points in their kitty, would want to add two more points to their kitty before the end of league engagement.

That will help them avoid Australia in the semifinals. Australia looks the favorite to finish as table toppers, who will clash with the fourth-placed team.

South Africa's Net Run Rate (NRR) is -0.440, which is much inferior to India's +0.526. However, India, after three consecutive defeats, can only reach up to 8 points.

All eyes will be on the sky on Tuesday due to multiple washouts in Colombo so far, which has put ICC's decision under scanner to host the games in the Sri Lankan capital at this time of the year.

Out of nine games in Colombo, five didn't produce a result due to inclement weather.

South Africa vs Pakistan
Match starts at
3.00 pm IST

On paper, Pakistan is no match for South Africa, even though Fatima Sana's team did win an ODI in the bilateral series that served as a dress rehearsal for the World Cup.

With skipper Fatima and veteran Diana Baig, the bowling does have some firepower on the slowish tracks at the Premadasa Stadium, but the batting unit doesn't have the wherewithal to chase any total in excess of 175. The likes of Laura Wolvaardt and Tazmin Brits at very strong at the top of the order, while Sune Luus and Marizane Kaap can keep the momentum going in the middle overs. —*PTI*

FIRST PLAYER FROM J&K

Parvez Rasool retires

MUMBAI, 20 OCT

Parvez Rasool achieved many firsts in his cricketing career. He was the first player from Jammu and Kashmir to represent India in international cricket, and was also the first cricketer from the region to feature in the Indian Premier League (IPL). But after 17 years of playing First-Class cricketclaiming 352 wickets and amassing 5,648 runs, the all-rounder has decided to move on from all formats of the game. The 36-year-old, who hails from Bijbehara in Kashmir, informed the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Saturday about his retirement. "When we started playing, not many took Jammu and Kashmir cricket seriously. But we went on to beat some of the big teams and also fare well in the Ranji Trophy and other BCCI-affiliated tournaments. I led the team for a fairly long period, and it gives me immense satisfaction to have contributed a bit to the team's success story. Back in 2012-13, Rasool was the standout performer for J&K as he ended the season with 594 runs and claimed 33 wickets, which earned him a place in the Indian team and also a contract with the now-defunct IPL franchise, Pune Warriors, led by Sourav Ganguly. —*PTI*

Parvez Rasool
PHOTO: PTI

Max Verstappen wins US Grand Prix title

AUSTIN, 20 OCT

Red Bull's Max Verstappen raced to his third victory in four races at the Formula 1 United States Grand Prix, while McLaren's Lando Norris took a huge chunk out of teammate Oscar Piastri's championship lead by finishing second.

What looked like a cruise control finish to his first career championship over the summer is now shaping up as a potential heart-pounding grind over the final five races of the season, starting next weekend in Mexico City.

Piastri still leads Norris by 14 points and Verstappen by 40, but nothing feels comfortable anymore.

"I'd still rather be where I am than the other two, but obviously this weekend was not what I wanted or expected," Piastri said.

His misery started Saturday when he crashed into Norris on the first turn of the sprint race and knocked out both cars. Verstappen won the sprint, punctuating the mishap between teammates that came in the first race after the first-lap scrap in Singapore had raised internal tension.

Piastri started Sunday sixth but only made up one place. The Verstappen-Norris 1-2 finish made it the fourth consecutive race Piastri has lost points to both drivers.

Verstappen has shaved a 104-point deficit to 40 in just four races. That includes the Azerbaijan Grand Prix when Piastri crashed on the first lap. —*PTI*

Max Verstappen
PHOTO: FORMULA1

INDIANS FACE TOUGH OPENERS

French Open: Satwik-Chirag eye a deep run

PARIS, 20 OCT

Fresh from a string of consistent performances in Asia, India's premier men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will look to go the distance at the French Open Super 750 badminton tournament, beginning here on Tuesday.

The world No. 6 duo, who reached the finals at both Hong Kong and China Masters before bowing out in the semifinals of the Denmark Open last week, will start against the Indonesian combination of Muhammad Rian Ardianto and Rahmat Hidayat.Having rediscovered their rhythm after an injury-plagued mid-season, the Indians will aim to convert their recent form into a title run at one of their favorite venues the tournament where they had claimed their maiden Super 750 crown in 2022 and also won in 2024.

They also claimed a second bronze at the World Championships in Paris this year.

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty *PHOTO: PTI*

Among others, Lakshya Sen, who reached the final of the Hong Kong Open, will begin his men's singles campaign against Nhat Nguyen of Ireland once again, while young Ayush Shetty, the US Open champion, faces a tough test against Japan's Koki Watanabe.Lakshya had defeated the Irish shuttle in three games last week in Denmark.

In the women's singles, rising star Anmol Kharb, who made a breakthrough semifinal appearance at the Arctic Open Super 500 earlier this month, has drawn a formidable first-round opponent in top seed An Se-young of Korea. —*PTI*

Pakistan grinds to 259-5 against SA in second test

RAWALPINDI, 20 OCT

Captain Shan Masood and Abdullah Shafique survived four dropped catches to hit half centuries as Pakistan grinded to 259 for five against world champion South Africa on the opening day of the second and final test on Monday.

Masood, put down on 71, scored bulk of his runs in singles before falling for 87 off 176 balls in the final session on a dry wicket that is expected to favor the spinners more and more.

Rabada should have dismissed Shafique off his fourth ball of the test match, but had to wait for his first wicket until late on the first day when he trapped Mohammad Rizwan (19) plumb lbw on the backfoot.Left-hander Saud Shakeel was batting on 42 and Salman Ali Agha was not out on 10 at stumps as South Africa could get just one wicket with the second new ball late on Day 1.Surprisingly South Africa used its best bowler in the first test Senuran Muthusamy for only two brief spells of two overs each. Keshav Maharaj (2-63) and Simon Harmer (2-75) kept the scoring rate under control by sharing 54 overs in between them. Pakistan 259 for 5 (Masood 87, Shafique 57, Maharaj 2-63, Harmer 2-75) vs South Africa. —*PTI*

Shan Masood
PHOTO: PCB